Hafa Adai!

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Do you and your loved one plan to stay in, eat out, or do a little of both this Valentine's Day?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

INSIDE

Bubba Hospitalized

Former President Bill Clinton, who had quadruple bypass surgery more than five years ago, was hospitalized Thursday to have a clogged heart artery opened after suffering discomfort in his chest.

Nation...Page 10

Attempted Kidnapping

Police fatally shot a man Thursday who allegedly tried to snatch a daughter of a politician whose family members were among 57 people killed late last year in the Philippines' worst political massacre, officials said.

Maharlika...Page 12

Jacko Honored

The late Michael Jackson has a prominent role in the revamped version of "We Are the World."

Life & Style...Page 21

AUSTERITY TALKS

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee chaired by Rep. Ramon S. Basa (Cov-Saipan), third from left, along with government lawyers, discuss a bill seeking to implement an eight-hour work reduction every pay period and unpaid holidays in Fiscal Year 2010 to help address the government's current financial crisis, at a meeting yesterday in the speaker's conference room on Capital Hill.

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

SHORTAGE OF FOOD, other basic goods on Rota

> "All retail stores supplying basic goods to the people are out of stock and the use of air transportation would result in inflationary pricing that will be prohibitive to the people"
>
> **—Rota Mayor Melchor A. Mendiola in letter requesting help from Gov. Benigno R. Fitial.**

Over 50 days since last shipment due to rough waters

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Rota is now experiencing shortage of food and other basic goods as a result of rough waters since last year that makes it impossible for the lone shipping vessel to enter the island's port to discharge its cargo. The last shipment of goods to Rota was on Dec. 21, 2009.

See SHORTAGE on Page 4

Obama strategy widens assault on terrorists

By MATT APUZZO
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—In the early months of his presidency, President Barack Obama's national security team singled out one man from its list of most-wanted terrorists, Baitullah Mehsud, the ruthless leader of the Pakistani

See OBAMA on Page 4

AP

In this image released by the U.S. Air Force, a fully armed MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle taxis down the runway at an air base in Afghanistan Nov. 4, 2007, on its way to another wartime mission.

Rota mulls name change for airport

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Rota International Airport may soon have its name changed to Fidel A. Mendiola International Airport if the Rota Legislative Delegation, the CNMI Legislature, and the Commonwealth Ports Authority concur on the proposal from community members.

CPA board member Barrie Toves dis-

See AIRPORT on Page 4

Ex-Tinian CUC resident director pleads guilty to 'ice' possession. PAGE 2

Tinian mayor mulls relocation, workforce reduction. **PAGE 3**

Local

COFFEE CONNECTION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Staff members of Northern Marianas College's Tinian Instructional Site and NMC Board of Regents Chairperson Janet King, right, recently held a "Coffee Connection" event, where they discussed various important matters, including opportunities where NMC can better serve the people of Tinian. Lucy Blanco-Maratita, chairperson of the CNMI Board of Education, center, was a guest at the event and participated in the discussion about how the partnership between PSS and NMC can be strengthened.

Ex-Tinian CUC resident director pleads guilty to 'ice' possession

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Former Tinian Commonwealth Utilities Corp. resident director Edward K. Quichocho entered a guilty plea yesterday in federal court in connection with the charges of trafficking methamphetamine or "ice."

Quichocho and counsel Michael Dotts signed a plea agreement with the U.S. government. The defendant pleaded guilty to one count of possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated judge David Wiseman accepted Quichocho's guilty plea and set the sentencing for May 18, 2010.

According to the factual basis of the plea agreement, on April 19, 2008 the defendant was in possession with intent to distribute .037 grams of "ice."

Wiseman allowed the continued release of the defendant while awaiting sentencing date with the same bail conditions as the court had previously set.

At yesterday's hearing, Dotts moved to allow Frances Quichocho to act as a co-third party custodian while third-party custodian, attorney Ray Quichocho, is off-island.

The defendant is brother of Ray Quichocho. Frances Quichocho is husband of Ray Quichocho, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

The U.S. government indicted the 50-year-old Edward Quichocho with one count of distribution of a controlled substance and one count of possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

The defendant and Dotts entered a plea agreement with the U.S. government represented by assistant U.S. attorney James Benedetto.

Possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine not to exceed $1 million.

Under the agreement, the stipulated sentencing guidelines range to be imposed against defendant Quichocho is six to 12 months in prison, and a fine from $2,000 to $20,000.

Drug Enforcement Administration agents arrested defendant Quichocho who was then a CUC official on Tinian last Nov. 10.

Alleged sexual harassment victim sues Labor for not allowing her to transfer

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A former night club employee who filed a sexual harassment lawsuit in federal court against the club owner has sued the Department of Labor for denying her request to seek a new employer.

Fea Dela Cruz La Torre in her petition in the Superior Court named as respondents the Department of Labor, and Japan Enterprises Inc. that owns Club Micronesia.

La Torre, through counsel Colin M. Thompson, asked the court to reverse and set aside the Labor administrative order issued by Deanne C. Siemer and the order affirming Siemer's decision penned by then acting Labor Secretary Cinta Kaipat.

The petitioner requested the court to allow her to transfer to a new employer and order Labor to issue her temporary work authorization while the case is pending in court.

Thompson said La Torre has the right to transfer relief pursuant to the statute because she was constructively discharged and she complied with the provisions of the contract to the extent practicable as required.

Thompson stated in the complaint that La Torre was hired in June 2004 from the Philippines to work for Japan Enterprises which owns Club Micronesia.

The lawyer said Club Micronesia required La Torre to meet and sit with customers who visited its establishments and to allow the customers to sexually harass her.

"As a result of the harassment and the employer's failure to remedy it, the petitioner was constructively discharged on July 8, 2004," Thompson said.

La Torre filed a discrimination case against Club Micronesia with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in July 2004.

EEOC wrote a letter to La Torre on March 21, 2005 to inform her that "there is reasonable cause to believe that charging party and females as a class were subjected to sexual harassment and constructively discharged because of their sex, female."

La Torre decided to file a lawsuit against Club Micronesia's owner on Sept. 24, 2009 in federal court. The parties subsequently entered a settlement.

Thompson said that on Oct. 26, 2009 Siemer issued an administrative order denying La Torre's request for transfer to a new employer.

The worker appealed to the Labor secretary. But then acting Labor secretary Kaipat affirmed Siemer's decision.

In La Torre's petition for judicial review, Thompson said Club Micronesia's owner agreed in the settlement to cooperate to obtain transfer relief.

Thompson said U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex Munson expressed support for La Torre's application for transfer relief.

"Transfer relief will afford the petitioner the 'benefit of the bargain' under her original contract," the lawyer asserted.

TO CUT EXPENDITURES

Tinian mayor mulls relocation, workforce reduction

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Tinian Mayor Ramon M. Dela Cruz wants his office relocated to a public facility and is looking at trimming his workforce—both aimed at cutting the municipality's expenditures this tight fiscal year.

Saipan Tribune learned that for many years, the Tinian Mayor's Office occupied a building space in a private property costing the municipality $3,800 in monthly rental.

Dela Cruz, along with Tinian Legislative Delegation chairman Sen. Jude Hofschneider and municipal council head Patrick Manglona, formally asked the Department of Public Lands to designate a government-owned lot for the Tinian Mayor's Office.

According to Allen Perez, the mayor's chief of staff, the relocation will bring substantial savings on the municipality's operational budget amounting to $45,600 per year.

Once the request is granted, Perez said only minimal cost will be spent in the renovation and repair of the new government facility.

In a letter to DPL Secretary Oscar M. Babauta, the Tinian local leaders said that they are in the process of relocating the mayor's office and a few department offices to existing government buildings to reduce monthly rental expenses.

These buildings, however, are in need of repair and the mayor's office has already assessed the cost of renovation for government buildings located in San Jose Village.

The Tinian leadership, they said, is putting the relocation plan on its priority list and is in the process of identifying funds for the renovation.

Under the continuing budget resolution, the Tinian municipality has about $3.4 million appropriation for this fiscal year, a big bulk of which goes to personnel salaries.

Compared to the previous years, Perez said the mayor's office now has fewer employees—115 to be exact.

Mayor Dela Cruz, he said, may lessen the current personnel figure if the budget could not sustain their employment.

"If we can't cover all our employees within the budget, we may probably have lesser workforce than before," Perez admitted to *Saipan Tribune*.

However, he pointed out that the mayor, at present, is intending to keep the workforce under the current budget allocation.

Because of tight financial condition of the municipality's budget, employees of the mayor's office were reduced of their work hours in the previous years—from 80 hours to 72 biweekly.

Perez disclosed that because they managed to reduce the personnel count, the municipality managed to maintain the employees' 80 work-hour schedule.

However, the mayor's chief of staff admitted that if the austerity holidays are mandated by the Legislature or the executive branch, the municipality will adhere to the measures.

IT&E, DoCoMo, community groups help victims of Haiti quake

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
American Red Cross NMI Chapter executive director John Hirsh receives a check from IT&E's Brad Ruszala.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
United Workers Association president Rabby Syed turns over the group's donation to ARC-NMI Chapter's John Hirsh. Also in photo are UWA officials Ronnie Doca, Jun Conciliado, and Victoria Syed.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Marianas Baptist Academy sophomore class of J.D. Tenorio Benjamin shows off its check donation to the ARC-NMI Chapter.

Since Jan. 12, 2010, various groups in the local community have shown support toward the Haiti relief effort.

Businesses such as IT&E, DoCoMo(Text to Give), Han's Corp, Azuma Ltd., Ron Smith, Toothworks, Immanuel Mission, Saipan Manamko Center, and United Workers Inc. have all made donations to the American Red Cross-International Relief Fund.

In addition, 15 sophomore students from Marianas Baptist Academy made a donation to the chapter toward the relief effort. Jessica Lee, a student of MBA, said she saw a person on TV who was rescued under the debris through using his phone, and she felt compelled to help.

Jodel Fernandez, another student, stated that she "felt bad…I wanted to extend our hands to help them."

The donations made to the Haiti relief efforts, through the Red Cross, will go toward purchasing immediate emergency supplies such as food, water, first aid supplies, hygiene, and cleaning supplies. To learn more on how to make a donation to the Haiti relief effort, call the NMI chapter at (670) 234-3459 or visit www.redcross.org. ***(PR)***

CUC schedules outage in Dandan this morning

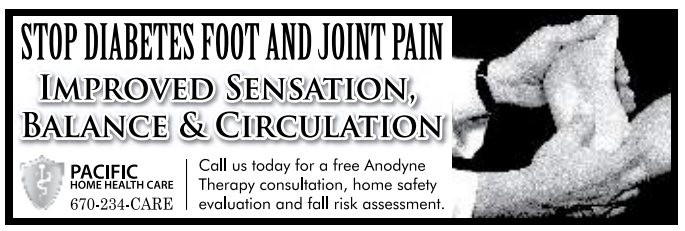
The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. announced that the scheduled power outage scheduled for today, Feb. 13, will begin at 7:30am and conclude at 10:30am.

This is the second phase of the scheduled maintenance for the Dandan homestead area and will include the replacement of the deteriorated pole hardware on the primary lines.

To minimize the number of affected customers, the power will be momentarily de-energized from the San Vicente Loop (former Roundhouse location) to the Dandan baseball field. This is required to isolate the Kiya 1 circuit south of the Dandan baseball field to the Obyan area where the work is to be performed. This process will be again repeated at 10:30am to re-energize the isolated areas.

The power interruptions are required for the safety of the linemen as they perform their work.

The CUC apologizes for any inconvenience the power interruptions may impose on the community and their consumers and will continue to work diligently to minimize future interruptions. ***(PR)***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★★★ATTENTION★★★

CNMI GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES

As of January 1, 2010, your Group Life Insurance Benefit offered through the CNMI Government is provided by Individual Assurance Company.

All eligible CNMI Government employees and retirees must re-enroll by February 26, 2010.

You may re-enroll through your Human Resources office. IAC will also be facilitating re-enrollment meetings at the office of Don Barcinas beginning **Tuesday, February 16, 2010.**

Donald C. and Tina O. Barcinas
General Agents, Individual Assurance Company
Cabrera Center, First Floor, Suite 106
Beach Road, Garapan
670.234.0960

IAC
Individual Assurance Company, Life, Health & Accident

NMC employee in machete attack ordered to answer 6 charges

Superior Court Associate Judge Perry B. Inos has ordered a staff of the Northern Marianas College to answer six charges for attacking an employee of the Commonwealth Health Center with a machete along Middle Road.

Inos found probable cause to believe that the crimes of assault and battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, criminal mischief, disturbing the peace, criminal contempt of court, and violating an order of protection were committed.

Inos determined that defendant Franklin S. Crisostomo may have committed the offenses.

The judge remanded Crisostomo to the custody of the Department of Corrections.

Arraignment was set for Feb. 22, 2010 at 9am.

Detective Simon T. Manacop stated in his report that alleged victim Thomas Asack and Crisostomo had a past relationship being bisexual partners.

Manacop said Asack wished to end his relationship with Crisostomo and that on Jan. 13, 2010, Superior Court associate judge Kenneth Govendo granted an order to protection for Asack.

Police said that, last Jan. 31 at 11:40am the Department of Public Safety received a call about a disturbance at the parking lot of McDonald's in Chalan Laulau.

Preliminary report showed that Asack was traveling south on a scooter along Middle Road when he noticed a silver Honda CRV traveling north direction on the opposite lane.

Asack continued traveling south direction, but suddenly the same silver CRV pulled near his side, causing him to nearly crash.

In a reckless manner, the vehicle driven by Crisostomo then sped away.

Fearing for his safety, Asack pulled along the parking lot of the Taste of India Restaurant and attempted to call the police for assistance.

Asack later noticed that the same CRV was pulling into the parking lot. He saw Crisostomo exiting his vehicle and shouting he was going to kill him and at the same time swinging a machete.

The victim ran away until he reached the main highway of Middle Road. A witness on board a vehicle pulled over in the middle of the highway to pick up Asack. The passenger of the car asked Asack to jump into the vehicle's back door.

The suspect stood in front the vehicle and swung the machete, damaging the front right portion of the hood. Crisostomo moved to the driver's side and swung the machete, damaging the top left portion of the front windshield.

The driver-motorist drove the car to McDonald's parking lot where they called police for assistance.

Asack is a respiratory therapist at CHC. Because of the attack, he flew back to the U.S. Mainland, *Saipan Tribune* learned. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

OBAMA

From Page 1

Taliban. He was to be eliminated.

Mehsud was Pakistan's public enemy No. 1 and its most feared militant, responsible for a string of bombings and assassination attempts. But while Mehsud carried out strikes against U.S. forces overseas and had a $5 million bounty on his head, he had never been the top priority for U.S. airstrikes, something that at times rankled Pakistan.

"The decision was made to find him, to get him and to kill him," a senior U.S. intelligence official said, recalling weeks and months of "very tedious, painstaking focus" before an unmanned CIA aircraft killed Mehsud in August at his father-in-law's house near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

It was not the first airstrike on Obama's watch, but it marked the first major victory in his war on terrorism, a campaign the administration believes can be waged even more aggressively than its predecessor's. Long before he went on the defensive in Washington for his handling of the failed Christmas Day airline bombing, Obama had widened the list of U.S. targets abroad and stepped up the pace of airstrikes.

Advances in spy plane technology have made that easier, as has an ever-improving spy network that helped locate Mehsud and other terrorists. These would have been available to any new president. But Obama's counterterrorism campaign also relies on two sharp reversals from his predecessor, both of which were political gambles at home.

Obama's national security team believed that the president's campaign promise to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq would have a side benefit: freeing up manpower and resources to hunt terrorists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Intelligence officials, lawmakers and analysts say that approach is showing signs of success.

Obama also has sought to reach out to Islamic allies and tone down U.S. rhetoric, a language shift that critics have argued revealed a weakness, in an effort to win more cooperation from countries like Yemen and Pakistan.

For example, though Pakistan officially objects to U.S. airstrikes within its border, following the Mehsud strike, the U.S. has seen an increase in information sharing from Pakistani officials, which has helped lead to other strikes, according to the senior law enforcement official. He and other current and former officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive security matters.

Pakistan's cooperation is key to U.S. counterterrorism efforts because much of the best intelligence still comes from Pakistan's intelligence agency. Ensuring that cooperation has been a struggle for years, in part because Pakistan wants greater control over the drone strikes and its own fleet of aircraft, two things the U.S. has not allowed.

"The efforts overseas are bearing fruit," said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a strident critic of Obama's domestic counterterrorism policies who said Obama has at times shown himself even more aggressive than Bush in his use of force overseas. "I give them generally high marks for their efforts to capture and kill terrorists in Pakistan, and they're pushing the envelope in Yemen."

CIA drones, the remote-controlled spy planes that can hunt terrorists from miles overhead, are responsible for many of the deaths. Drone strikes began increasing in the final months of the Bush administration, thanks in part to expanded use of the Reaper, a newer generation aircraft with better targeting systems and greater, more accurate firepower.

Obama has increased their use even further. A month after Mehsud's death, drone strikes in Pakistan killed Najmiddin Jalolov, whose Islamic Jihad Union claimed responsibility for bombings in 2004 at U.S. and Israeli embassies in Uzbekistan. Senior al-Qaida operatives Saleh al-Somali and Abdallah Sa'id were killed in airstrikes in December. And Mehsud's successor at the Pakistani Taliban, Hakimullah Mehsud, died following an attack last month.

Intelligence officials and analysts say the drawdown of troops in an increasingly stable Iraq is part of the reason for the increase in drone strikes. The military once relied on drones for around-the-clock surveillance to flush out insurgents, support troops in battle and help avoid roadside bombs.

With fewer of those missions required, the U.S. has moved many of those planes to Afghanistan, roughly doubling the size of the military and CIA fleet that can patrol the lawless border with Pakistan, officials said.

"These tools were not Obama creations, but he's increased their use and he has shifted the U.S. attention full front to Afghanistan," said Thomas Sanderson, a defense analyst and national security fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Obama administration has also benefited from stepped-up cooperation with officials in Osama bin Laden's ancestral homeland of Yemen. Authorities there killed 30 suspected militants in airstrikes in December closely coordinated with U.S. intelligence agencies.

SHORTAGE

From Page 1

Rota does not have a glass breakwater to allow ships to enter the port during all weather conditions.

Saipan Shipping Co. Inc. marketing manager Alex Sablan said yesterday that the company has been trying to enter the Rota port every weekend since late December but the sea and weather conditions have been preventing the vessel from making it to the port.

"This weekend, we will attempt again. Every weekend, we try to enter Rota, even though our normal schedule is every other weekend," Sablan said, adding that the company is also concerned about the lack of supply of basic commodities on the island.

On Rota, stores have been running out of food supplies, especially rice.

"We are out of stock of rice for a month now. The last shipment we had was on Dec. 21. People now use air freight to bring rice to Rota but that's mostly for personal use," Harvest Market manager and co-owner Estrella Mendiola told *Saipan Tribune* in a phone interview.

Mendiola said using air freight costs a lot of money. Harvest Market has three branches on Rota.

Asking for help

Rota Mayor Melchor A. Mendiola asked Gov. Benigno R. Fitial for help on the matter.

"I request your office to look into this matter to help us provide a more lasting solution. Additionally, the present shipping service was never satisfactory to those served as experienced in the past and at present," Mendiola said in a Feb. 11 letter to the governor.

Efren Atalig, chief of staff of the Rota mayor, said they have yet to receive a response from Fitial as of yesterday.

The Rota mayor was meeting with island officials yesterday afternoon to discuss the shipment problems.

The Office of the Governor has yet to respond to media request for comment.

Mendiola said the inability of the shipping vessel to call port "is mainly caused by the fact that a barge is being used which requires a very calm ocean condition in order to enter the port."

The other problem, he said, is the shipping company's schedule. He said the ship normally calls Rota on the weekends "and at times the calm conditions occur during weekdays."

The ship's last voyage to Rota was on Dec. 21, 2009.

"From the last voyage, it has been 52 days. A communication from my office with the Emergency Management Office provided a picture of worsening ocean condition for the whole month of February inclusive of March and April," Mendiola told the governor.

Calm ocean conditions usually occur in May.

"All retail stores supplying basic goods to the people are out of stock and the use of air transportation would result in inflationary pricing that will be prohibitive to the people," the mayor said.

Senate Pres. Paul A. Manglona (R-Rota), in a separate phone interview yesterday, said "it's bad enough that the prices of basic goods on Rota are more expensive than those on Saipan and now with the lack of shipment, things could become more expensive."

He said due to the rough seas, the goods now have to go from Guam to Rota and then to Saipan because they could not enter Rota, and then back to Guam.

"Rota is now lacking rice and even frozen food like chicken and meat products. It's a very serious condition," the senator said.

This is not the first time in recent period that Rota experienced food shortage as a result of delayed shipment due to sea and weather conditions.

Saipan Shipping's Sablan said in August, September, and October 2009, due to typhoons and tropical storms, they also had difficulty entering Rota's port.

"Rota has no safe port. It's not only our vessel but any other vessel wouldn't be able to enter the port. The other option to bring in goods is through plane but that costs a lot," he said, adding that the island's western port is open directly to the sea.

Small craft advisory

In related news, the CNMI Emergency Management Office issued another special marine advisory at 4:30pm yesterday, stating that the small craft advisory for hazardous seas remains in effect until noon today.

Based on information received from the National Weather Service in Guam, EMO said moderate to free trade winds are expected through the weekend.

"Winds have diminished below 22 knots but seas 10 feet or higher will still produce conditions hazardous to operators of small craft," EMO said.

The governor therefore strongly advised the general public to avoid venturing near exposed reefs and beaches as rip currents are life threatening.

"Exercise caution when operating smaller vessels in these conditions especially near reef lines or when entering or leaving harbors," the governor said.

AIRPORT

From Page 1

closed yesterday to the board that community members have asked his assistance to initiate the effort of initially presenting the proposal to the board prior to seeking the Legislature's support.

Fidel A. Mendiola was considered among the pioneers who saw the humble beginning of the island's airport during Trust Territory time.

Saipan Tribune learned that Mendiola was employed as the Rota ports superintendent on Sept. 28, 1979 by the Mariana Islands Airport Authority which was subsequently renamed the CPA.

In December 1994, he was appointed the Rota airport and seaport manager until his retirement on May 29, 1998.

Toves said Mendiola, during his 19-year tenure with the ports authority, pioneered the development and improvements of the Rota International Airport and that the people of the island are grateful for his public service, contributions, and achievements.

He started his work career as an elementary school teacher and subsequently became a professional helmsman, master of ocean-going vessels, Rota Municipal Council member, and U.S. Postal Service Contractor.

Mendiola died last Feb. 3 at the age of 79.

Yesterday, the CPA board led by acting chairman Thomas "Kiyu" Villagomez, adopted a resolution conveying its condolence and sympathy to the bereaved family of the late CPA official and to pay tribute for his service with the agency.

Villagomez also welcomed the community's proposal and expressed his full support.

However, the acting chairman pointed out that because the airport facility is a government-owned property, the resolution to change the facility's name depends on acquiescence of the local delegation and the Legislature.

"If it is the position of the Rota community to have it named after Mr. Mendiola and the local delegation concur the proposal, I will be in full support to it," Villagomez said.

Like the Saipan International Airport which was renamed to Francisco Ada International Airport, Toves said they will ask for the enactment of a public law.

Saipan Local Law No. 13-10 officially named the SIA to Francisco Ada International Airport in honoring the contributions of the Commonwealth's first lieutenant governor who pioneered the development of the facility.

After yesterday's expression of support from the board, Toves said they will soon seek the Legislature's approval.

Japan's 'Hot City' sends greetings at Hot Pepper Festival

The 6th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival has drawn the attention of Otawara City in Japan, a location also renowned for its production of hot peppers.

In a letter to Tinian Mayor Ramon M. Dela Cruz this week, Mayor Hiromi Yoshioka of Otawara City congratulated the municipality for its festival coming up this weekend (Feb. 13-14).

"It would be very nice if hot pepper becomes a bridge to connect the Northern Marinas and Japan," said Yoshioka. "We are determined to do our best, as Tinian people have been doing, to spread the goodness of hot peppers over the world."

Yoshioka is also president of Otawara "Hot City" Promotion Council, promoting the hawk-claw shaped "san-taka" (Japanese for "three hawks") peppers. Otawara City, located 95 miles north of Tokyo, used to produce up to 5,000 tons of hot pepper a year about 40 years ago, but production has dwindled to 20 tons. Yoshioka said the city holds its own hot pepper festival each year and is working to regain its share of the market in Japan.

"We are hot; you are hotter," Yoshioka said in his letter to the Mayor Dela Cruz. "The hotter we become, the more prosperous our places will be."

The Tinian Hot Pepper Festival is an annual signature event of the Marianas Visitors Authority aimed at attracting visitors and media to the Northern Mariana Islands.

For more information about the festival, contact the MVA Tinian office at 1(670) 433-9365 or e-mail at vborja@mymarianas.com. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tinian's famous *Donni Sali* hot pepper.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Donni Sali products on sale.

GCA PGFC February winners

After weeks of practicing and preparing for the fourth PGFC competition this year, Grace Christian Academy garnered a number of awards.

This event, held at San Vicente Elementary School last Feb. 6, was participated in by some of the vibrant, confident, and loving kindergarten and grade school students and supported by the equally vibrant, confident, and loving parents, judges, and teachers. Once again, kudos to all the participants. Below is the list of those who made it to several places.

K-2 DIVISION

Impromptu Speaking A
Tae Yong Kim- 1st Place
Clark Birmingham- 2nd Place
Riley Anne Buenaventura- 4th Place
Andrei Yue- 5th Place

Impromptu Speaking B
Martin Angelo Pangilinan- 1st Place
Matt Jason Moran- 2nd Place
Arvin Dayao- 3rd Place
Robert Hanrey Schorr- 4th Place
Amaris Birmingham- 5th Place

Readers Forum- Masters B
Matt Jason Moran- 3rd Place

3-5 DIVISION

Dramatic Interpretation A
Rita Riona Laxamana- 1st Place
Veeny France Revilla- 5th Place

Dramatic Interpretation B
Alfie Madlambayan- 2nd Place
Yasmin Angela Marcelo- 3rd Place

Humorous Interpretation A
Tiffany Madlambayan- 2nd Place
Alfie Madlambayan- 4th Place

Humorous Interpretation B
Alyssa Jean Pantaleon- 4th Place

Readers Forum Masters A
Cameron Boyer- 1st Place
Francis Joseph Dalusung- 2nd Place
Mycah Klerang Yobech- 3rd Place
Franchesca Dalusung- 4th Place
Rita Riona Laxamana- 5th Place

Readers Forum Masters B
James Matthew Marasigan- 1st Place
Alyssa Jean Pantaleon- 5th Place

Readers Forum Masters C
Veeny France Revilla- 1st Place
Eden Abigail Deang- 2nd Place
Kenichi Luke Shirata- 4th Place
Paula Rose Talibong- 5th Place

Readers Forum Masters D
Yasmin Angela Marcelo- 1st Place
Audrey Yue- 3rd Place

Readers Forum B
Joshua Peter Tenorio- 5th Place

Readers Forum D
Miku Matsumura- 4th Place

Impromptu Speaking A
Dianne Doris Arnold-1st Place
Art Matthew Mamaril- 2nd Place
Jae Lee- 3rd Place
Mycah Klerang Yobech- 5th Place

Impromptu Speaking A
James Matthew Marasigan- 1st Place
Francis Joseph Dalusung- 4th Place
Kenichi Luke Shirata- 5th Place

GCA PGFC Volunteer Judges
Parent Volunteer- Mr. Mark Birmingham
NFL Student Judges- Cristine Cristobal, Kamille De Leon, Krisvel Eugenio, Maria Esmero, Darlene Barcelon

Teachers/Coaches
Miss Melissa Harper- K4/5
Mrs. Leah Garfil-1st Grade
Miss Kelly Dawe-2nd Grade
Miss Estrella Samonte-3rd Grade
Mrs. Maricel Hoffa- 4th Grade
Mrs. Esther Manzano- 5th Grade

GCA PGFC Coordinator- Mrs. Esther Manzano
Discipline Officer-Miss Heather Linday
Principal- Mrs. Marsha Owens

A LOOK AT PAST CAMPOREES

Boy scouts explore Anatahan Island

By OSCAR C. CAMACHO
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Editor's Note: The author is the Troop Committee chairman for the NMI Boy Scouts. As part of celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America, the Saipan Tribune *is publishing a series of articles featuring past camporees and activities of the local boy scouts program. The following is an excerpt of a longer article.*

Justice V. suggests to Mr. Stan to incorporate lesson on holding and tying a coconut crab. Ansen attempt and ties it with outrubber tubes. Four adults sit and four stand under a tent just set panel to talk about family of boys. The boys take turns tying the crab. Mr. Stan instructs the correct way. Each express coconut crab bite experiences. Mr. Cal tells Ayuyu bites on his back. Discussion on village visit and hiking to the betel nut plantation. Polite manners in inviting ourselves to the one and only one anticipated meal bat meal.

The wildlife and forestry staff excused themselves in participating in the feast-*chatpagu angin para hami kumentuse*. "Maolekna hangin hamyu." Justice V. shows off his father's knife formed out of a G.I. jeep spring. Ton Sebastian should have had a one too remarked Ben. Rene is last in tying crab, and he seems to be putting a lot of effort.

In the distance, we see Farallon de Mendenilla bombed. The explosions are huge; one would think they were walls of clouds in the distant horizon. Everyone stood up with curiosity and converse around it. Mr. Flores spotted a bat flying off into the ravine very nearby. The bombing was initiated by the Covenant and millions of birds are sacrificed. Justice V. noticed the Citronella or insect repellant bucket not lit, and asked if it should be lit. We retorted he should light it. Well, he asked. The flies are coming back. We hope this repellant works. Mr. Reyes doubts if it would work. Justice V. shows off his boots or shoes. Quality shoes from Denver. Used in Naftan Point and Forbidden Island in the water on the rooks and it won't slip. Cal ordered a pair.

Justice V. asked if any on the adults were going hiking to the betel nut plantation. We raised our hands. Mr. P. Guerrero asked if we could pick. "Yes, but not to bring them stated Paul Santos. Justice says yes. Mr. Benedicto planted the trees in public land and Stan put in that trees reached the heavens, and we could hear the angels sing. I put in my two worthless cents if we could do the Guamanian way of picking betel nut-"Well, just teasing." The Guamanian way is to cut down the trees, and some outsiders have been known to do it here remarked Mr. Ben. Mr. Flores told a story of when he was in the 6th grade during a stormy weather. He figured since banana trees are cut to prevent being blown down by heavy winds that cutting down betel nut trees should be same. Mr. Reyes is cooking and Mr. Saures is helping and everyone else is just watching, including myself. On board the Challenger, the sun is directly above our heads. The wind is frisky and blows good winds. Stan waves at us standing on the hill above the cliffs; we sped away along the coast of Anatahan heading to the village on the other side. A view, a spectacular view of the sharp ridges, the rocks, the barren soil and the carpeted grass.

We passed the sire of our first attempt to set camp, sharp, squared block volcanic rocks protruding out of the sea. We're approaching the "Bintana", a window in Spanish, and beaches lined with pebbled stones. Pine trees and colonies of coconut trees line the ridges and ravines. Boulders and boulders of rocks line the beach. The hills are steep carpeted with grass and small shrubs.

Wishing you sparkling joy, success and good fortune.....this Year of the Tiger!
2010
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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Love in the Year of the Tiger

In a classic response of Sino indirection, the late Teresa Tang sang, *"You ask me how deep my love is, how much I really love you. Think about it. Look at the moon. The moon represents my heart."* That song has remained popular to romance-challenged contemporary China, particularly with its mix metaphor of depth, breadth and height.

This year's February 14th St. Valentine's love day in the West meets Lunar New Year in the East. Hallmark and the rest of the greeting card industry again are claiming mileage on the antics of *eros,* the sentiments of *philos,* and the profound demands of *agape*. It's no different this year! Marry that to the unleashed domestic consumer spending of China as its version of stimulus package to sustain its 8% *pa* economic growth in a time of global recession, and we are looking at a possible love fest of lunatic proportion!

Famed St. Denis wine from d'Or region of France is being introduced to the Chinese palate at affordable basement prices (a third of its price elsewhere!) this season, even as the cold winds of Xizang (Tibet) to *Dong Bei* (Manchuria) fail to dampen the spending spirit of a newly flushed-with-cash Chinese population. That's just one of many new products knocking at Hu Jintao's domestic consumption door!

Memories of the earthquake in Sichuan two years back reminds the Hans and their siblings of how China harnessed its communal power to assist kin and kindred spirits. The Beijing Summer Olympics triumphs of 2008, the National Day extravaganza of 2009, and the glitter of the Shanghai International Expo 2010, manifest the truth that the sleeping giant has grown muscles and is asleep no more! It is no more bellicose than some in our ranks, nor is it historically a world dominating bear; it is more like a Panda seeking its rightful place where it really just wants to belong.

Much has been said about China as an added market to the CNMI visitors' industry, along with Russia, to add to Japan and Korea. It may just as well be a good time today to remind our guardians at Homeland Security that building a moat around the castle is not the only method of promoting domestic well-being, equanimity and tranquility.

Mandela of the fledgling South Africa of '94 declared to the world: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; it is that we are powerful beyond all measures. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us."

Were we to remain the "land of the free, and the home of the brave," we need to learn that we are at our convincing best when we show it, rather than allow polished propaganda to be the envy of many from a distance, heavy on shrill but empty of substance. Fear may be a temporary deterrent, but we know deep in our souls that love conquers all!

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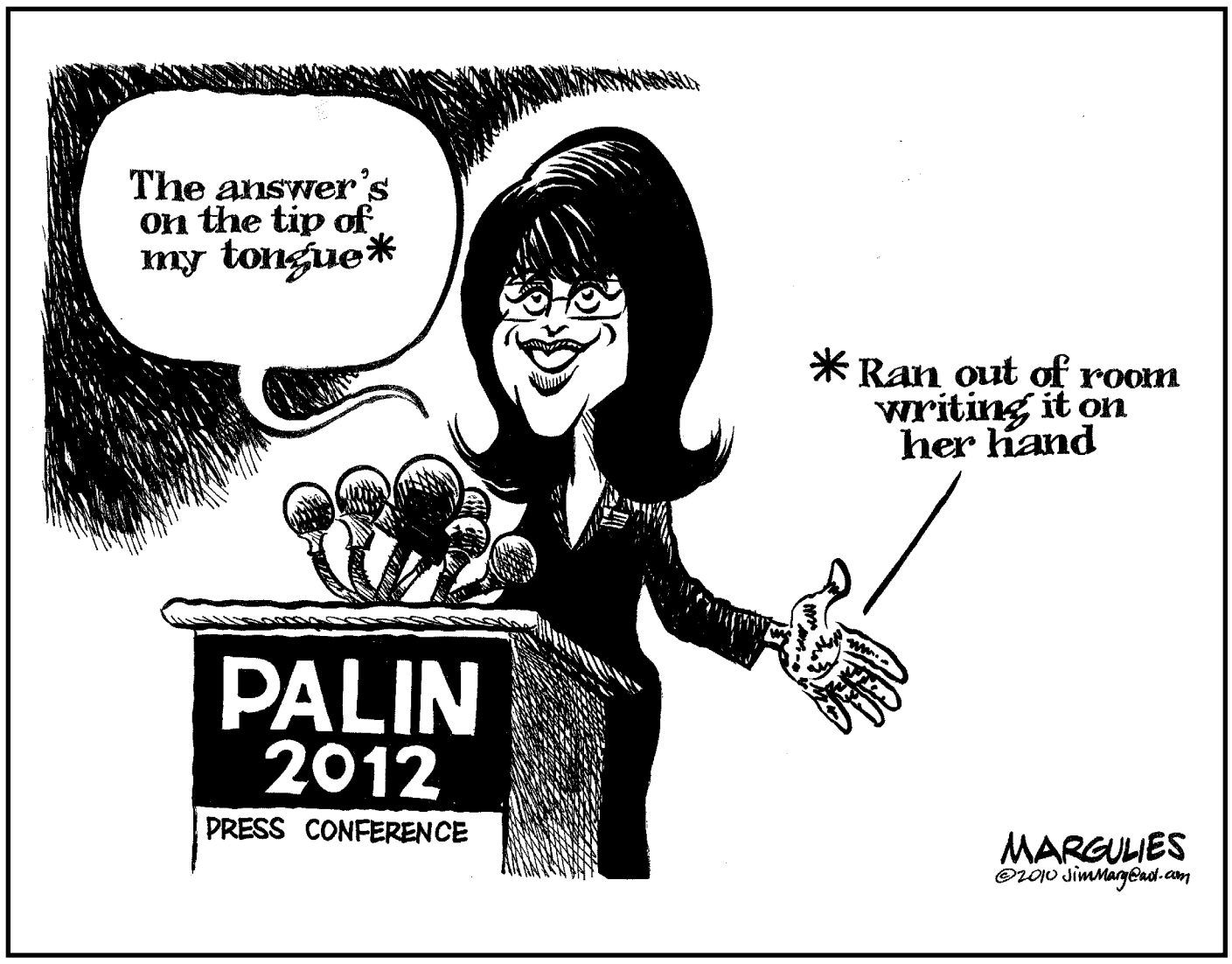
The answer's on the tip of my tongue*
* Ran out of room writing it on her hand
PALIN 2012
PRESS CONFERENCE
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Under Obama, Labor should have made more progress

By HAROLD MEYERSON
Special to The Washington Post

Meyerson is editor-at-large of American Prospect *and the* L.A. Weekly.

For American labor, year one of Barack Obama's presidency has been close to an unmitigated disaster.

Labor's primary priority — the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) — died when the Democrats lost their 60-vote majority in the Senate. Labor's normal priority — a functioning National Labor Relations Board — also seems out of reach, with Republicans on Tuesday blocking the appointment of Obama nominee Craig Becker (that's why Massachusetts Republican Scott Brown scurried down to Washington last week to take his seat). Other key legislation for which labor has lobbied, including health-care reform and financial regulations, languishes in the Senate.

For the unions, the Senate's inability to pass EFCA is devastating and galling. Democratic senators had developed a compromise proposal that would have jettisoned the controversial "card check" process — by which unions could be organized without a secret ballot — in favor of expediting the election process (so that management couldn't delay for months, or even years, employees' votes on whether to unionize) and stiffening the penalties for violating the rules that govern election conduct.

The compromise had a shot at winning all 60 Democratic votes. The unions, which spent more than $300 million in the 2008 elections on Democrats' behalf, wanted a vote on EFCA last year, but Obama and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid asked them to wait until health reform had passed. (Their requests for confirmation votes on NLRB appointees were similarly delayed.)

By my count, this marks the fourth time in the past half-century that labor's efforts to strengthen workers' ability to organize have been deferred by the Democratic presidents and the heavily Democratic Congresses they supported. In 1965, about the only piece of Great Society legislation not enacted was the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act provision that gave states the power to block unions from claiming as members all the employees in workplaces where they had won contracts. In 1979, as American management was beginning to invest heavily in union-busting endeavors, the first effort to reform labor law failed to win cloture in the Senate by one vote as President Jimmy Carter stood idly by. In 1994, President Bill Clinton responded to a similar labor-backed effort by appointing a commission to recommend changes in labor law to the next Congress — which turned out to be run by Newt Gingrich. And last year, by asking his labor supporters to wait, Obama ensured — unintentionally, of course — that the next effort to revive organizing must wait until the next overwhelmingly Democratic Congress.

Meanwhile, the percentage of American workers in unions steadily declines. During the 1965 effort, more than 30 percent of private-sector workers belonged to unions. In 1979, the share was 21 percent; in 1994, 11 percent; and in 2009, just 7.2 percent. When the next chance to rewrite labor law comes around, the rate of private-sector unionization could be down to trace elements.

What will life be like in an America with almost no private-sector unions or collective bargaining? We had a glimpse of that during George W. Bush's presidency, in which the unionization rate was already so low that median household incomes declined even as gross domestic product rose. It's also apparent that a deunionized private sector won't readily support — politically or economically — a unionized or expansive public sector. In 1960, when California Gov. Pat Brown created the nation's foremost public sector — the greatest university systems, freeways and aqueducts — it was paid for by the nation's most vibrant, and one of its most highly unionized, private-sector economies. California's private sector is nowhere near as vibrant or unionized today — a major reason its public sector is crumbling.

In a deunionized America, it's not clear who, if anyone, will fund campaigns such as those the unions funded this year, for universal health care and financial regulation. It's also not clear who, if anyone, will persuade working-class whites to vote Democratic. (Over the past half-century, white male union members have voted Democratic at a rate 20 percentage points higher than their nonunion counterparts.)

No nation has ever been home to a middle-class majority absent a sizable labor movement. In their failure to advance labor's prospects, the Democrats condemn themselves to a future of fewer Democratic voters and their nation to a future of mass downward mobility.

American workers suffered a loss of a different kind Friday with the death of Beth Shulman from complications of a brain tumor. In her 2003 book, "The Betrayal of Work," and throughout her life, Beth eloquently championed the interests of the tens of millions of Americans who barely make enough to get by. Her voice, and her warmth, will be missed.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Palin, speed-dating the right, won't commit

By MARGARET CARLSON
(c) 2010, *Bloomberg News*

Carlson, author of "Anyone Can Grow Up: How George Bush and I Made It to the White House" and a former White House correspondent for Time magazine, is a Bloomberg News columnist.

Forget the jokes about Sarah Palin being a palm reader. To her followers, the scribbled notes on her hand—there, seemingly, to remind her of her main talking points—is not at all like a sophomore cheating on a history final.

To them, it's one more endearing quirk. Presidents use teleprompters. Real leaders make do with what they have.

After she brought down the house at the first convention of the Tea Party and told Chris Wallace on Fox News she is considering running for president, there is no denying the force of Palin—and not just in the tea-party movement.

She's a force and a hazard in the GOP. Many in the Republican establishment see her as they did the leaders of the Christian Right—as folks to be used but, like Pat Robertson, laughed at for their aspirations to higher office. Palin doesn't see herself that way.

It's no shock that Palin is the darling of the tea parties. That's like skiers loving snow. She's a vessel of focus-group grievances.

What is shocking is that she's not going to be limited by the tea partiers. While happy to accept their love—albeit for a hefty fee—she has no intention of being monogamous. She's already moved beyond it.

As part of her cross-country dating, she is endorsing some Republicans running against conservative tea-party candidates.

In the race for the Republican nomination for Texas governor, the tea-party candidate, Debra Medina, a nurse turned businesswoman polling at 24 percent in a three-way race, is the perfect Palin fare, the pure conservative going after a toxic establishment incumbent.

You'd think Palin would be all over Medina, trying to reprise for the tea-party movement the special congressional election in New York last fall, when she helped force out the establishment Republican in favor of an arch-conservative. Palin's pick in that contest went on to lose to the Democrat, but among believers, it was just as important to be right as to win.

Instead, in Texas, Palin endorsed the incumbent governor, Rick Perry. Since Palin weighed in, Perry has surged ahead of his other primary challenger, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, the favorite of the Bush family who narrowly led Perry in polling last fall.

On Sunday, Palin headlined the largest rally of the Perry campaign. Fresh from her tea-party triumph at Opryland, Palin spoke to a blissful crowd pumped up by patriotic music by Ted Nugent, confetti guns and signs so professionally done it would make a tea partier choke.

To keep her insurgent street-cred going, Palin made sure to feed some longhorn red meat to the crowd, mentioning to wild cheers the notion of the Lone Star State "seceding from the union."

A Palin endorsement is akin to Warren Buffett saying it's time to buy. Until Palin indicated her support, Sen. John McCain looked vulnerable to tea-party activism in his primary. Of course, there's loyalty there. She had to stand by her man after he stood with her against his presidential campaign staff when they admitted, after the game was over, that Palin was not fit to be vice president.

Still, her siding with McCain, who's been in the Capitol almost three decades, was another setback to the tea party's efforts against incumbents who've been too long in power, especially Washington power.

Former congressman turned conservative radio talk-show host J.D. Hayworth was leading McCain last fall, when more than 60 percent of Arizona Republicans said McCain was out of touch with his base and almost 70 percent of Arizonans had a favorable view of Hayworth. Since Palin disclosed plans last month to stump for McCain, his favorable ratings are up, Hayworth's are down, and McCain has surged, with one poll giving him a 22-point lead.

It's not all due to Palin, of course. Maverick no more, McCain has moved sharply rightward. He uttered hardly a peep when the Supreme Court shot down his pet cause, campaign finance reform. He was for abolishing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military until last week, when he came out against it.

This week, tea became the official drink of the South Carolina GOP, which furthers Palin's goal of mating at least some segments of the establishment with the outliers.

There's a risk for Palin in making too nice with the establishment, however.

She is a candidate sharpest when she is running against more than just an incumbent president but against all of the ins in favor of the outs—against party regulars, hired handlers, vegans, secularists, most pointy-heads east of the Mississippi and everyone who watches David Letterman.

Like all populists, she's great on the stump, with her particular mix of Alaska frontierswoman and Valley-Girl-with-tanning-bed. But unlike most populists, she's not faking the absence of book learning. William Jennings Bryan could have reeled off all the Founding Fathers, what papers he read and his priorities without a teleprompter. Or crib notes.

Toyota's world turned upside-down

By WILLIAM PESEK
(C) 2010, BLOOMBERG NEWS

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The brake pedal and accelerator of a new Toyota Camry is shown at the Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, plant in Georgetown, Kentucky, Monday, February 8, 2010.

You know Japan's world is upside down when the fabled Toyota is a global laughingstock.

A name once synonymous with quality has fallen so far that Americans are actually rushing out to buy Detroit's clunkers. You have to love a corporate scandal that boosts General Motors and Ford and gins up consumer advocate Ralph Nader in one fell swoop.

Toyota President Akio Toyoda has done just that and it's time for him to resign. He must go not because of the company's biggest-ever and growing recall, but to take responsibility for how pathetically he is handling the crisis. Thanks to unsteady leadership, Toyota's market value has lost the equivalent of Latvia's annual gross domestic product since Jan. 21.

As this costly tale unfolds, it's worthwhile to take stock of some early lessons for corporate Japan. Here are five.

1 The cover-up can be worse than the problem itself. Design glitches happen. The key is to act quickly and boldly, especially when you are dealing with personal safety and negative newspaper coverage around the globe. Toyota is stuck in a crisis of its own making.

There's a perception that Toyota dragged its feet on its sudden-acceleration and braking-system woes. And it seems well deserved. The fact the company's president has largely avoided public statements smacks of guilt. That Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood is spending more time at the microphone than top Toyota officials demonstrates how poorly the company is playing things.

2 Beware driving naked. It's hard not to conclude that one of history's most-trusted brands has just been found unclothed in the Warren Buffett sense.

The reference here is to the oft-cited Buffett comment that it's only when the tide goes out that you learn who has been swimming naked. First, the global credit crisis hammered the mightiest of carmakers as liquidity and demand dried up. Next came the recall crisis.

Toyota may eventually come back from the brink. It isn't about to ask for government lifelines, as General Motors and Chrysler Group did. Yet who knew Toyota had been driving with its shorts down all these years?

3 Don't make your competitors' day. Toyoda has his work cut out for him as he tries to steer around the biggest crisis since his grandfather founded the company in 1937. Judging from how ineptly and non-transparently he has handled things, Toyoda's management abilities aren't commensurate with the reverence with which Japanese hold his family name.

That, no doubt, has executives from Detroit to Seoul dancing in their offices. A year ago, GM, Hyundai and the world's other big automakers quaked at Toyota's success. Now they marvel at the extent to which a once bullet-proof competitor is shooting itself in both feet. Corporate leaders stumble from time to time. The key is not delivering a massive windfall to rivals.

4 Don't become a national microcosm. Japan's economy is about to become No. 2 in Asia as deflation worsens. Like Japan, Toyota succeeded in its headlong drive to become No. 1, got there and then let the forces of complacency seep in.

Sadly for the economy, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's Democratic Party of Japan is in disarray. Fund-raising scandals tied to the party's No. 2 official, Ichiro Ozawa, are rapidly sinking the government. Ozawa should step down, and fast. One wonders if Toyoda will be far behind.

Just as Toyota needs to reverse course, Japan must get serious about retooling the economy. A country and an automaker make for a bumpy comparison. Even so, much of what's wrong in the halls of Japanese power—denial and becoming too big for your own good—is wrong with Toyota. Coasting is no longer an option for either.

5 Things can only get worse. When North America President Yoshimi Inaba was called to testify before Congress on Feb. 10, Toyota's top brass should have seen it for what it is: a shot across Toyota's bow. There are midterm elections in Washington this year, and many officials will slap Toyota around for political gain.

Sure, the U.S. media is hyping Toyota's woes, and some consumers are overreacting. Yet Toyota must work hard to repair a brand that has been badly dented globally. If not, where will Toyota find itself? Driving naked and relegated to fighting for second or third place.

William Pesek is a Bloomberg News columnist.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a slight chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼74°	▲86° ▼75°	▲86° ▼76°	▲86° ▼76°

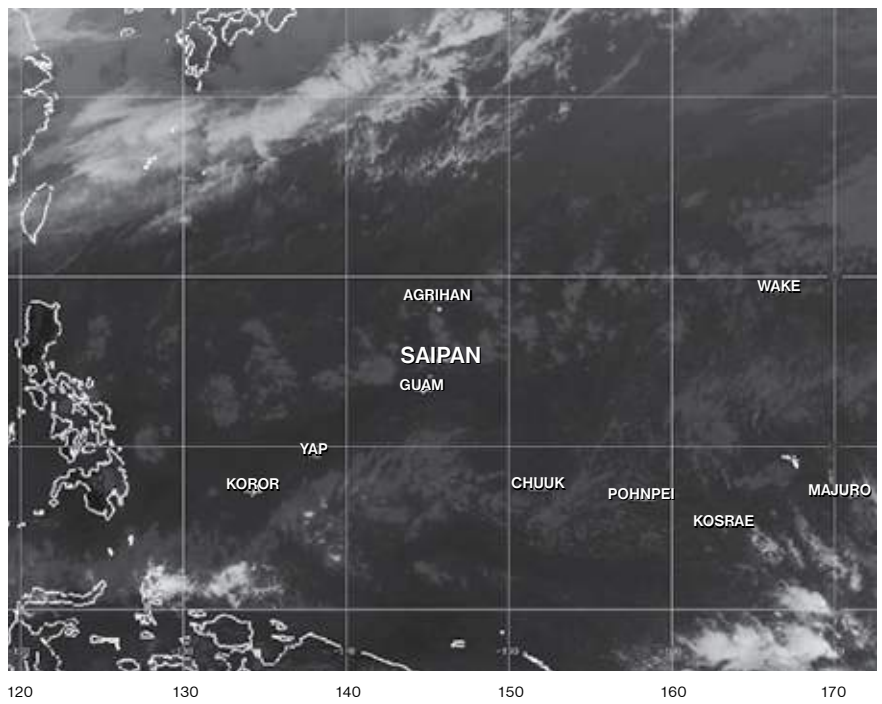
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲84	▼74
Palau	Showers	▲88	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲86	▼76
Chuuk	Showers	▲88	▼78
Pohnpei	Mostly Sunny	▲85	▼75
Kosrae	Showers	▲86	▼76
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	▲85	▼77

Around The Globe

Auckland	Partly Sunny	▲76	▼69
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	▲33	▼19
Hong Kong	Rain	▲71	▼69
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲77	▼66
London	Rain/Snow	▲43	▼27
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	▲72	▼50
Manila	Mostly Sunny	▲86	▼74
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	▲78	▼62
Miami	Mostly Cloudy	▲67	▼46
New York	Partly Sunny	▲35	▼24
Osaka	Cloudy	▲44	▼35
Paris	Cold	▲26	▼25
Pusan	Cloudy	▲45	▼33
Rome	Mostly Sunny	▲47	▼35
Salem	Showers	▲56	▼38
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲59	▼48
Seoul	Cloudy	▲36	▼21
Tokyo	Cloudy	▲44	▼30
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲34	▼22

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2010
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Low-level convergence is creating scattered showers in Kiribati between the equator and 2N from 176E to 180. A diffuse shear line extends west from 15N180 to 12N163E then southwest to 7N155E. Cloudiness and scattered light showers are found along and up to 200 miles north of the boundary. Low-level convergence is producing a line of clouds and light showers east of Yap and Palau extending southwest from 10N145E to 2N133E then west to beyond 1N130E. An area of marine stratocumulus clouds is located northeast of Wake Island between 20N and 25N from 164E to 180.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

1:31 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet
8:19 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet
1:53 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
6:55 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:43 AM	6:20 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	6:20 PM
Monday	6:42 AM	6:21 PM
Tuesday	6:41 AM	6:21 PM
Wednesday	6:41 AM	6:21 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	5:52 AM	5:39 PM
Sunday	6:30 AM	6:26 PM
Monday	7:05 AM	7:12 PM
Tuesday	7:39 AM	7:59 PM
Wednesday	8:14 AM	8:46 PM

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 28, 2010

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:25am	5:15am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT
NW638	8:00am	10:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily
NW289	5:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ119	4:00am	11:25am	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 6:40am, leave OSA 9:30am	
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

CA8282	3:15am	7:00am	1, 5

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 4, 5, 7 via PUS
C09603/893	3:15pm	9:10pm	3, 5 via GUM-PALAU
OZ606/715	3:20pm	11:30pm	7 via ICN
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:10am	3:45am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:00am	2:30am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:50am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:00am	3:45am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:35am+1	Daily via NRT effective Jan 25
NW277	8:30pm	1:00am+1	3, 6
NW639	9:00pm	1:35am+1	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW290	10:00am	2:35pm	Daily
NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	9:00pm	1:35am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	Daily via Osaka
		Arrive OSA 8:50pm, leave OSA 9:50pm	
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

CA8281	6:40pm	1:55am+1	4, 7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4, 6 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
C0892/9596	10:10pm	7:50am+1	3,5 via PALAU-GUM
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2 ,4 ,6, 7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2, 4 ,6 ,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CA: China Airlines; CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

Schedule of Religious Services

CATHOLIC

Mt. Carmel Cathedral
Sunday Mass: 6am, 9am, 11am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm

Korean Center
Sunday: 10:30am
Wednesday: 10am
Thursday-Friday: 8pm
Saturday: 3pm and 7:30pm

Kristo Rai Parish
Sunday Mass: 6am, 8am and 9:30am
Monday- Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm
Saturday: 6am and 6pm

Nuestra Senora De Soledad Parish
Wednesday Mass: 6pm
First Friday Healing Mass: 6pm
Saturday Mass: 6pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30am & 9am

Saint Jude Parish
Sunday: 6am, 8am, 10am
Wednesday and Thursday: 6pm

San Antonio Parish
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Tuesday and Friday: 6pm

San Francisco de Borja-Rota
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6pm

San Isidro-Rota
Sunday: 5am and 10am
Monday-Wednesday: 7pm
Thursday-Saturday: 5am and 7pm

San Jose (Oleai) Parish
Sunday: 6am and 7:30am
Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday: 6pm

San Roque Parish
Sunday: 9am
Wednesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10:30am

San Vicente Parish
Sunday: 6am, 9am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6pm

Santa Remedios
Sunday: 7:30am
Tuesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10am-Baptism

Santa Soledad
Sunday: 7:30am

PROTESTANT

Born Again Christian (Upper Room Int'l Ministries), Saipan
Wednesday Prayer and Healing Night: 8-10:30pm
Saturday Tagalog Service: 8-10:30pm
Sunday English Service: 9:30-11am
Sunday School for Children: 10-11am
Sunday Filipino Service: 7-9pm

Calvary Baptist Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 9am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10am
Sunday Evening Worship: 6pm
Wednesday Prayer Service: 7pm

Chinese Christian Church of Saipan
Worship Services: Sunday, 10am and 7:30pm
Bible Study: Tuesday-Friday, 9:25pm

Cornerstone Christian Church, Saipan
Worship/Study Opportunities
Adult Sunday School: 9am
Youth Sunday School: 9am
English Worship Service Sunday: 10am
Sunday Service: 5:30pm
Worship/Fellowship Sunday: 9:30pm
Evangelism/Follow-up: Sunday/Monday: 1:30/7:30pm
Worship Team: Monday/Saturday-9pm;
Cell Groups Tuesday: 7:30pm
Mid-week Service: 7:30pm
Prayer Meeting Wednesday: 7:30pm
Leader's Bible Study Friday: 7:30 pm
Cornerstone School of Ministry Saturday: 7:30pm

Episcopal/Anglican Church on Saipan
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Worship Service Sunday: Holy Communion 9:00am
Place: Vicarage, Chalan Laulau,
Call 235-0545 for directions

Grace Christian Assembly, Saipan
Worship Service: 9am
GBI Classes: 4-6pm
Prayer Meeting: Monday-Saturday: 6am
Sunday: 7am
Home Cell Bible Study: Wednesday-Friday: 7pm
Youth Service: Friday: 5:30pm

Iglesia Ni Cristo, Saipan
Wednesday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Thursday: 5:30am (English); 7:45 pm (English)
Saturday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Sunday: 6:45am (English)
Children Worship Service: Sunday, 9am (English)

Immanuel United Methodist Church Koblerville
Sunday Services
9:00 AM
Place of the church-next to Mt. Carmel Cathedral on Chalan Kanoa Dr. • Tel: 322-6158
Pastor JJ Matsumoto

Immanuel Methodist Church (Filipino Congregation)
Sunday: 7:00am-Choir Rehearsal
8:00am-Church Service (Tagalog)
9:15am-Sunday School
Wednesday: 6:30pm, home group
8:00pm-Prayer Meeting
Thursday: 7:30pm-Choir Practice (Church)
Saturday: 8:00pm-Choir Practice (Parsonage)

Jesus is Lord Church, Saipan
English Service: 9-11am, Sunday
Tagalog Service: 6-8pm, Sunday

Korean Presbyterian Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 8:20am
Sunday Adult: 10am
Sunday Adult: 11:30am
Sunday Evening: 7:30pm
Wednesday: 8pm

Life in the Son Christian Fellowship, Saipan
Sunday Worship Service: 10am– 12noon
Tuesday: Leadership Institute 7pm-10pm
Wednesday: Corporate prayer 7pm-8pm
Last Friday of the month-prayer: 7pm-11pm
Friday: Youth on Fire: 7pm-9pm
Tel. No. 235-LIFE (5433)

Marianas Baptist Church, Saipan
English Worship Service: 9-10:30am
Evening Worship Service: 6-7pm
Children Sunday School: 9-10:30am
Tagalog Sunday School: 11am-12pm
English Sunday School: 11am-12pm
Korean Worship Service: 11am-12pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting:
English, 7pm-8pm
Korean: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Missions Connection Ministry
Every Sunday Celebrations:
10am (English), 6pm (Tagalog)
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
Youth Impact Friday: 7pm
Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Northern Marianas Christian Church
Sunday Worship Service 10am Fina Sisu Housing FS#1 (Child care will be provided)
Friday Services @ 7pm Fina Sisu FS#1 for more info pls. contact Ryan 484-2620

Saipan Bible Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30-10am
Divine Worship: 10am-11:30am
Evening Service: 7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8pm-9pm

Saipan Christian Church
Sunday: 7:30am-10am
Sunday: 6:30 pm -9pm
Monday: 8 pm -10pm (Prayer Meeting)
Thursday: 8pm-10pm (Cell Groups)

Saipan Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Class: 9am
Sunday Worship: 10am
Sunday Worship English: 6pm
Sunday Worship Tagalog: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30pm

Saipan Community Church
(Sunday Services)
Palau Service: 7:30am-9am
English Service: 10am-11:30am
Chuukese Service: 1pm-2:30pm
Filipino Service: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Saipan
(Saturday Church Services)
Sabbath School Program: 9-10am
Lesson Study: 10-10:40am
Divine Service: 11-12pm
Visitation: 3-4pm
Adventist Youth Program: 4:30-5:30pm
Sundown Worship: 6-7pm

First Baptist Church
(Formerly Saipan Baptist Church)
Afetna St., San Antonio
Sunday

9am	Sunday school
10am	Regular worship
6pm	worship

Wednesday

7pm	worship

Everyone is warmly welcome to attend our worship services. Transportation is readily available to anyone who needs a ride to our church. For further information, please call Pastor David M. Mclure at 234-1939/235-7779.

Thy Word Ministries Saipan Faith Center
Phone 234-0209
New Christian Charismatic Church Service located in Chalan Paio, Beach Road in the Sablan building on the 2nd floor above Subway Sandwiches.
Senior Pastors: George & Gail Kamakahi
Asst. Pastors: Eric & Penny Sakaguchi
Service Times
Sunday 10:00am Worship Service
Sunday 7pm Discipleship Classes
Tuesday 10:00am Bible Studies
Tuesday 6:00pm Intercessory Prayer
Tuesday 7:00pm Music Practice
Wednesday 7:00pm Mid-Week Service
Saturday 10:00am Evangelism

Upper Room International Ministries
Sunday 5:30am-6:30am
Morning prayer

7am-9am	English service
7am-9am	Sunday school
10am-12noon	English service, Koblerville

Wednesday	7pm-9pm	Prayer meeting
Saturday	7pm-9pm	Tagalog service

Venue: Jason Presbyterian Church
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30am
Sunday AM Worship:10:30am
Sunday PM Worship:7:00am
Wed Worship: 7:30pm
Prayer 45 min. Prior to Service Times
Morning Prayer: 6-8am M-S

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Feb. 13, 2001

Travel agents deployed to promote NMI tourism
In a last-ditch effort to help the Commonwealth lure tourists from Taipei, Mandarin Airlines has deployed at least 150 travel agents to increase awareness of Taiwanese travelers about the Northern Marianas as a destination. Mandarin Airlines Saipan Station Manager Charlie Ling disclosed that the carrier has beefed up efforts in hopes that regular flights between Taipei and Saipan will continue despite revenue losses in the past months. These travel agents were asked to discuss various travel packages with different agencies in the Asian country who, in return, will be promoting Commonwealth tour packages to Taiwan travelers.

Mr. Ling said results of the promotional program will be submitted to Mandarin Air this month. He added that the airline company has intensified promotions of the CNMI especially after the charter with Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino expired in November last year.

Hotel occupancy rate grows 4%
Hotel occupancy rate increased four percent to 63 percent in the third quarter of 2000, intensifying upbeat moods created by the apparent growth of the Northern Marianas tourism industry in the first three months of last year. Analysts said this only shows the volatility of the travel sector and how easily can the rally of neighboring Asian economies affect economic and business conditions on the islands. Preliminary statistics obtained from the commerce department also revealed a significant increase in the average hotel room rate during the July-September 2000 period, from $84 in the second quarter to about $95.

Feb. 13, 2002

Cost-analysis of medical referral program sought
Newly-appointed Public Health Secretary James U. Hofschneider vowed to conduct a cost-analysis study of the medical referral program, which has reportedly caused financial losses to the department. Hofschneider cited the need to review the program in line with efforts to save the government needed money amid the hard economic times while effectively providing healthcare services to the public. "What we need to do is to look at the whole medical referral program and how we can save money because the economy is slow, and we need to make sure that we refer the patients to the most cost-effective area," he said.

9th Circuit: NMI a 'state' in Quiet Title Act dealings
The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in favor of the CNMI in an important case regarding submerged lands, the Attorney General's Office said. In a decision rendered on February 7, 2002, the appeals court agreed with the CNMI's position that section 502(a)(2) of the Covenant requires that the CNMI be treated as if it were a state when dealing with Quiet Title Act. The Commonwealth filed the case in order to take possession of the "submerged lands underlying the internal waters, archipelagic waters, and territorial waters adjacent to the Northern Mariana Islands."

Feb. 13, 2003

Tinian woos Mobil for jet fueling system
A delegation of Tinian leaders is flying to Guam this week to meet with ExxonMobil executives on the possibility of installing a jet fueling system for the soon-to-be unveiled West Tinian International Airport. Tinian would need a jet fuel service facility in anticipation of the increased aviation traffic once the new airport opens, Senate Vice President Jose M. Dela Cruz said yesterday. "Even if we finish the airport, without the fueling facility there for the jet to refuel and go back to its original destination, we won't be able to realize the potential of this new international airport.

DPS, FBI solve City Trust bank rob
Local and federal authorities yesterday announced solving the City Trust Bank robbery, charging three men-including a businessman-in federal court. The incident, considered the Commonwealth's first bank robbery, happened in April 2002 at the bank's Gualo Rai branch. Two of the three suspects remain in custody after the indictment proceedings. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Alex R. Munson imposed no bail on Norman Kapileo and Lionel Borja. The third suspect, businessman Vann Le, is still at large. But Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Smith said the joint task force composed of agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the CNMI Department of Public Safety is tracking down the suspect.

Business

Moral support no money, EU says to Greece

BRUSSELS (AP)—European Union leaders faced down markets Thursday with a statement of support for Greece—but offered no detailed bailout for a debt crisis that has plunged the euro into its deepest crisis since it was launched 11 years ago.

The 16 countries that use the euro promised to "take determined and coordinated action, if needed, to safeguard financial stability in the euro area as a whole."

But they left out any detail about what they might do to prevent the country from defaulting on its massive debt.

Markets reacted coolly to the vague promise of help. Analysts warned that worries over a Greek default have not gone away, despite assurances from the Greek government that it will do whatever it takes to reduce a massive budget deficit.

A Greek default would be a serious blow to Europe's monetary union and undermine the whole idea of a common currency, vulnerable because it is used by countries with different fiscal policies.

EU nations are reluctant to put money on the table for Greece, believing that this would let the country off the hook for years of economic mismanagement and faked statistics—and might encourage overspending by others who they think they too will be bailed out.

The euro continued its slide, dropping around 1.5 U.S. cents over the day as hopes of immediate financial assistance faded. By early evening the euro was trading at $1.3630, near nine-month lows. It was $1.51 in late November.

But the bond market reacted well, with fears of default continuing to recede. The spread, or difference between 10-year Greek bonds and a German benchmark stood at 2.71 percentage points by late afternoon on Thursday, well below the 2.83 points seen overnight and 3.50 points last week.

Neil MacKinnon of VTB Capital said it is "inevitable, given the seriousness of the eurozone debt crisis, that the endgame is some sort of bailout. Otherwise risk of default or even breakup of the monetary union becomes a real possibility."

Germany, the EU's richest nation, said it was ready to help if necessary. Chancellor Angela Merkel said eurozone nations would "stand shoulder to shoulder with Greece." She stressed that the country has not asked for a financial bailout and is committed to making big budget cuts this year.

Florists fret storm will wilt Valentine's sales

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Snow-clogged streets and closed office buildings are posing twin logistical challenges for Mid-Atlantic florists as Valentine's Day approaches, and some worry it won't be a rosy holiday unless sales bloom when the shoveling ends.

Shops are marshaling SUVs and four-wheel-drive vehicles to make deliveries in storm-battered cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, which virtually shut down when a pair of blizzards dumped record-breaking snow.

Though Valentine's Day always comes in wintry February, the combination of it falling on a long weekend, plus massive office closings, unplowed streets and weather-delayed floral shipments has put some florists on edge.

"This is probably the worst, there's no question about it," said David Hope, owner of Flower Gallery Inc. in Washington. "We're jokingly saying we want to suggest they pass a law to change Valentine's Day to August."

When Feb. 14 falls on a weekend, florists say, many bouquet senders want the flowers delivered a day or two earlier so the recipient gets them at work in front of envious colleagues.

But most businesses have been closed because of the snow, which means a lot of rerouting to homes in suburbs that may not be well-plowed. And Monday is a federal holiday—Presidents Day—when government offices will again be shuttered.

"I wish somebody would say, 'All of next week is officially Valentine's Week,'" Hope said. "Every florist has hundreds of roses, and whether they're all going to sell or not is the big question."

Cris Wilkins, owner of Flowers By Michael in Baltimore, said he received a shipment of flowers on Thursday from Colombia that was delayed a day because of the storm. But even though he has the necessary supplies, attracting customers and making deliveries are still challenges. He worries he could lose half his business for the holiday.

Nation

Former President Clinton undergoes heart procedure

NEW YORK (AP)—Former President Bill Clinton, who had quadruple bypass surgery more than five years ago, was hospitalized Thursday to have a clogged heart artery opened after suffering discomfort in his chest.

Two stents resembling tiny mesh scaffolds were placed inside the artery as part of a medical procedure that is common for people with severe heart disease.

The 63-year-old Clinton was "in good spirits and will continue to focus on the work of his foundation and Haiti's relief and long-term recovery efforts," said an adviser, Douglas Band.

Terry McAuliffe, former Democratic National Committee chairman and a close friend of the Clintons, said Clinton participated in a conference call on earthquake relief as he was being wheeled into an operating room.

He expected Clinton to be released from the hospital Friday.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton traveled from Washington to New York to be with her husband, who underwent the procedure at New York Presbyterian Hospital, the same place where his bypass surgery was done in September 2004.

At that time, four of his arteries were blocked, some almost completely, and he was in danger of an imminent heart attack.

Cardiologist Allan Schwartz said the former president had been feeling discomfort in his chest for several days, and tests showed that one of the bypasses from the surgery was completely blocked.

Instead of trying to open the blocked bypass, doctors reopened one of his original blocked arteries and inserted the two stents. The procedure took about an hour, and Clinton was able to get up two hours later, Schwartz said.

AP

In this photo taken from video, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, center, arrives at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Thursday, Feb. 11, 2010 in New York.

There was no sign the former president had suffered a heart attack, and the new blockage was not a result of his diet, Schwartz said.

The doctor said Clinton could return to work Monday.

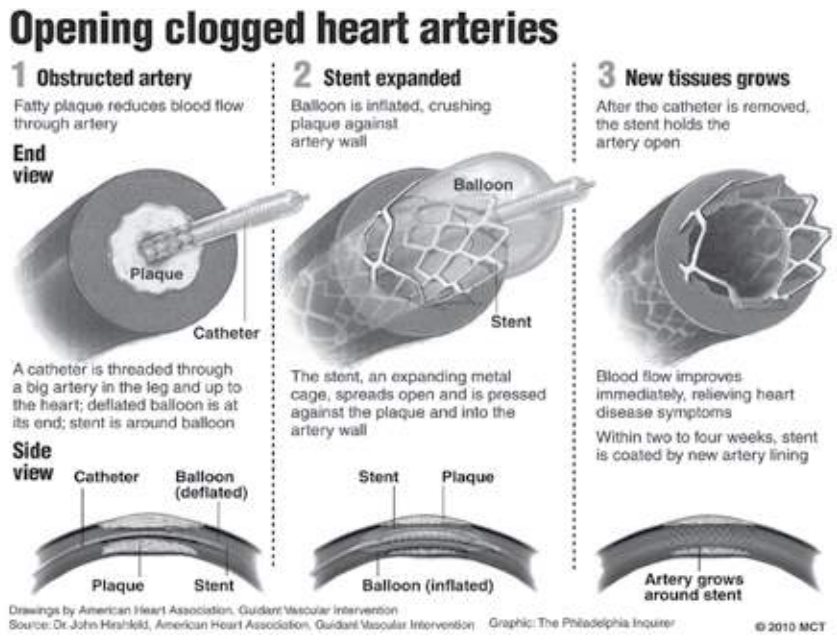
"The procedure went very smoothly," Schwartz said, decribing Clinton's prognosis as excellent.

In an angioplasty, the procedure Clinton had on Thursday, doctors thread a tube through a blood vessel in the groin to a blocked artery and inflate a balloon to flatten the clog. Often, one or more stents are used to prop the artery open.

The angioplasty is usually done with the patient awake but sedated. It's one of the most common medical procedures done worldwide. More than a million angioplasties are done in the United States each year, most involving stents.

"It's not unexpected" for Clinton to need another procedure years after his bypass, said Dr. Clyde Yancy, cardiologist at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas and president of the American Heart Association.

The sections of blood vessels used to create detours around the original blockages tend to develop clogs five to 10 years after a bypass, Yancy explained. New blockages also can develop in new areas.


Opening clogged heart arteries
1 Obstructed artery
Fatty plaque reduces blood flow through artery
End view
Plaque
Catheter
A catheter is threaded through a big artery in the leg and up to the heart; deflated balloon is at its end; stent is around balloon
Side view
Catheter
Balloon (deflated)
Plaque
Stent
2 Stent expanded
Balloon is inflated, crushing plaque against artery wall
Balloon
Stent
The stent, an expanding metal cage, spreads open and is pressed against the plaque and into the artery wall
Stent
Plaque
Balloon (inflated)
3 New tissues grows
After the catheter is removed, the stent holds the artery open
Blood flow improves immediately, relieving heart disease symptoms
Within two to four weeks, stent is coated by new artery lining
Artery grows around stent
Drawings by American Heart Association, Guidant Vascular Intervention
Source: Dr. John Hirshfeld, American Heart Association, Guidant Vascular Intervention
Graphic: The Philadelphia Inquirer
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Official: Nuclear problems were administrative

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)—The Air Force on Thursday blamed administrative problems for the decision to remove an Air Force squadron overseeing an underground nuclear weapons cache, detailing another instance of questionable oversight even after the military took steps to correct similar issues.

Ron Fry, spokesman for the Air Force Materiel Command, said the problems were related to a failed inspection. But a nuclear expert suggested it appears the problems ran deeper, based on the Air Force's decision to reassign five noncommissioned officers.

The Air Force on Jan. 27 decertified the 898th Munitions Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base, which maintains an estimated 2,000 nuclear warheads inside a bunkered storage facility.

Fry said the 898th Munitions Squadron was included in a regularly scheduled nuclear surety inspection in November involving its parent unit, the 498th Nuclear Systems Wing, as well as the 377th Air Base Wing—all based at Kirtland.

The two wings and the unit all failed the inspection, Fry said, but initially it was decided that the squadron wouldn't be decertified. Fry said the problems were mainly administrative, such as handling of paperwork and documentation. He declined to elaborate.

A reinspection was scheduled for mid-February. But late last month Brig. Gen. Everett Thomas, commander of Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center—the overseer of Air Force nuclear surety—recommended the squadron be decertified to allow time to identify the root cause of its problems.

Washington mayor criticized over snow removal

WASHINGTON (AP)—The mayor of the nation's capital and other politicians are feeling the heat for not moving faster to clear the streets of snow after the historic back-to-back blizzards that slammed the East Coast.

"Right now I'm miserable. We still can't get out," said Carolyn Ward, who serves on a neighborhood commission in Washington. "If they had a plan, it wasn't a good one."

In Washington, which was blanketed with about 18 inches of snow over the weekend and 10 more on Tuesday and Wednesday, residents complained that snow removal by Mayor Adrian Fenty's administration seemed arbitrary, with some streets plowed numerous times, others not at all. At one point, 25 percent of the city's snowplows were out of commission, having broken down on the hard snow, officials said.

Politicians heard similar complaints about slow or haphazard snow removal in Pittsburgh, Baltimore and outlying areas of Maryland.

How quickly the elected officials get rid of the stuff could determine their political futures, a hard lesson learned over the years by some big-city mayors.

"Snow, politically, in Washington—in most places—is a very high-stake poker game," said former Washington Mayor Marion Barry, now a city councilman. He was heavily criticized in 1987 for vacationing in California during the Super Bowl as snowstorms paralyzed his city for five days. "People are very emotional about snow."

A Washington Examiner editorial Thursday declared, "Mayor Fenty fails the snow test," noting that stores and other businesses that rely on private snow removal services cleared their property more quickly than the city did.

Some of the City Council's 13 members have been critical as well, saying they will hold a hearing to examine the city's response. Councilman Phil Mendelson criticized the mayor's numerous news conferences, saying the plows that were employed to clear his route could have been put to better use.

Army discharging single mom who refused deployment

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP)—A single-mom soldier who says she refused to deploy to Afghanistan because she had no family able to care for her young son will be discharged from the military instead of facing a court-martial, the Army said Thursday.

Spc. Alexis Hutchinson, an Army cook stationed at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, was arrested in November after skipping her unit's deployment flight. Hutchinson, 21, said she couldn't leave her son because her mother had backed out of plans to keep the child a few days before the soldier's scheduled departure.

The Army filed criminal charges last month against Hutchinson of Oakland, Calif., but a general at neighboring Fort Stewart chose to settle the case by granting her an administrative discharge rather than try her in a military court.

"She's excited that she's no longer facing jail and can still be with her son, which is the most important thing," said Rai Sue Sussman, Hutchinson's civilian attorney. "We're very happy about it right now."

The decision still carries consequences for Hutchinson. She is being demoted in rank to private and will lose benefits afforded to military service members and veterans, Fort Stewart spokesman Kevin Larson said.

ACROSS THE NATION

Texas gov. candidate questions any US role in 9/11

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—A Republican gubernatorial candidate said Thursday she has questions about whether the U.S. government was involved in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks—a statement she swiftly backed away from and one that drew immediate criticism from her better-known rivals in the race. Gov. Rick Perry and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison dismissed the comments made by Debra Medina on the Glenn Beck Show that there were "some very good arguments" that the U.S. was involved in bringing down the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. "I don't have all of the evidence there, Glenn," Medina said. "I think some very good questions have been raised. In that regard there's some very good arguments and I think the American people have not seen all the evidence there."

Stolen plane, chalk-drawn feet: Teen burglar back?

SEATTLE (AP)—A stolen airplane found in the San Juan Islands and chalk-outline feet drawn all over a burgled grocery store suggest that Washington's infamous teenage "barefoot burglar" is back at it. Authorities across western Washington state have been hoping to catch alleged bandit Colton Harris-Moore since the lanky 18-year-old escaped from a halfway house in April 2008. Since then, he's suspected in scores of burglaries, many of them near his home on Camano Island and in the San Juan Islands north of Seattle. Investigators believe he more recently turned to joyriding in airplanes. Surveillance video of some burglaries showed the culprit barefoot—hence the moniker.

Transformer explosion shatters NY building windows

NEW YORK (AP)—An explosion in a transformer underneath a Manhattan sidewalk sent flames up the front of a landmark building Thursday, shattering windows and blackening the front of several stories. No injuries were reported. Consolidated Edison spokesman Christopher Olert said the transformer was in a vault below the front of the seven-story building. An investigation was under way into the cause. Deputy Fire Chief James Daly said firefighters were initially called out for a report of smoke coming out of a manhole. He said firefighters had been out all night to deal with manhole fires because of runoff from snow and salt coming into contact with electrical grids below ground.

Kennedy won't run for re-election in RI

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rep. Patrick Kennedy has decided not to seek reelection to Congress, saying his life is "taking a new direction." Kennedy taped a message to be aired on television in Rhode Island on Sunday night. The Associated Press viewed the message ahead of the announcement. The decision by the eight-term congressman comes less than a month after a stunning Republican upset in the race for the Massachusetts Senate seat his late father, Edward Kennedy, held for almost half a century.

Asia

US and Afghan troops ring Taliban stronghold

NEAR MARJAH, Afghanistan (AP)—U.S. and Afghan forces ringed the Taliban stronghold of Marjah on Thursday, sealing off escape routes and setting the stage for what is being described as the biggest offensive of the nine-year war.

Taliban defenders repeatedly fired rockets and mortars at units poised in foxholes along the edge of the town, apparently trying to lure NATO forces into skirmishes before the big attack.

"They're trying to draw us in," said Capt. Joshua Winfrey, 30, of Tulsa, Okla., commander of Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines.

Up to 1,000 militants are believed holed up in Marjah, a key Taliban logistics base and center of the lucrative opium poppy trade. But the biggest threats are likely to be the land mines and bombs hidden in the roads and fields of the farming community, 380 miles (610 kilometers) southwest of Kabul.

AP

U.S. soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, walk past a RG-31 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle as they come back after a mission west of Lashkar Gah in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, Thursday, Feb. 11, 2010.

The precise date for the attack has been kept secret. U.S. officials have signaled for weeks they planned to seize Marjah, a town of about 80,000 people in Helmand province and the biggest community in southern Afghanistan under Taliban control.

NATO officials say the goal is to seize the town quickly and re-establish Afghan government authority, bringing public services in hopes of winning support of the townspeople once the Taliban are gone. Hundreds of Afghan soldiers were to join U.S. Marines in the attack to emphasize the Afghan role in the operation.

Japan says 3 whalers injured by activists

SYDNEY (AP)—Three crew members of a Japanese whaling vessel suffered face and eye injuries from acid fired by anti-whaling protesters during their latest clash in the Antarctic Ocean, their Japanese employers said Friday.

The Sea Shepherd protesters said they lobbed butyric acid, produced from stinking rancid butter, which they often aim at the whalers to try to disrupt the annual Japanese hunt. The activists maintain that butyric acid is nontoxic.

The injuries sustained Thursday were the first to Japanese whalers this year during confrontations with Sea Shepherd, although there have been two ship collisions for which each side blamed the other.

Japan's Fisheries Minister Hirotaka Akamatsu lashed out at the activists on Friday, telling reporters: "I am full of rage. I could not believe they did such a thing."

China urges US to cancel meeting with Dalai Lama

BEIJING (AP)—China urged the United States on Friday to immediately cancel plans for President Barack Obama to meet with the Dalai Lama next week, warning the move could further hurt ties.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu issued the remarks hours after Washington announced Obama would meet with the Tibetan spiritual leader at the White House on Feb. 18.

China accuses the Dalai Lama of pushing for Tibetan independence, which the Dalai Lama denies, and believes that shunning the exiled Tibetan monk should be a basic principle of international relations. Obama has been under intense pressure to meet with the Dalai Lama after putting off a meeting in October.

"We urge the U.S. side to fully understand the high sensitivity of Tibet-related issues, honor its commitment to recognizing Tibet as part of China and opposing 'Tibet independence,'" Ma said.

The U.S. should cancel the meeting "so as not to cause further damage to Sino-U.S. relations," Ma said in a statement.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Report: NKorea's top nuclear envoy to visit US

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—A top North Korean nuclear envoy is set to visit the United States next month for rare bilateral talks, a news report said Friday, as diplomats pushed to revive negotiations on ending Pyongyang's nuclear program. Plans call for North Korea's Kim Kye Gwan to travel to the U.S. in March, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported from Beijing, citing an unidentified source. In Washington, State Department spokesman Fred Lash said late Thursday that he had not seen the report. A meeting between the North Korean envoy and U.S. officials would be a strong sign that the push to get the disarmament talks back on track was gaining traction. It would also confirm a warming in relations between the U.S. and North Korea, wartime rivals that do not have diplomatic relations.

Thailand to deport crew of NKorean weapons plane

BANGKOK (AP)—Thai authorities dropped charges Thursday against a foreign plane crew accused of smuggling arms from North Korea, easing a diplomatic jam but leaving open the vexing question of where the multimillion dollar illicit arms shipment was headed. The five-member crew from Kazakhstan and Belarus was arrested Dec. 12 when the Ilyushin Il-76 cargo plane they were flying from the North Korean capital Pyongyang landed in Bangkok. Thai authorities, acting on a tip from the United States, found 35 tons of weapons on board—a violation of U.N. sanctions against North Korea. The U.N. Security Council discussed the incident Thursday, and Japan's U.N. Ambassador Yukio Takasu said afterwards that the committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea was working on a letter than will remind Pyongyang of its obligation to comply with the ban on exporting or importing weapons.

Pakistan: 2 suicide blasts aimed at police kill 15

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—Two suicide bombers struck outside a police complex in northwest Pakistan on Thursday, killing 15 people and underscoring the relentless security threat despite army operations and U.S. missile strikes against al-Qaida and the Taliban. The second blast went off as rescuers responded to the first—a militant tactic seen before in Pakistan, but not often. Of the 15 dead, at least nine were police, while the 30 people wounded included the city's police chief, hospital official Abdul Hafeez said.

The attacks coincided with a visit to Islamabad by White House National Security Adviser Jim Jones.

World

After 1 month of chaos, Haitians help themselves

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—In the month since the worst disaster in Haitian history, an enormous international aid effort has not provided the people of Marassa 14 with the food, shelter and security they need. So they built a new community from scratch.

Cardboard street signs mark the rows of makeshift plastic tents where more than 2,500 people sleep in the dirt. Handwritten ID cards stamped by a security committee show who belongs, and women serve cheap fried plantains and breadfruit for families struggling to feed their children.

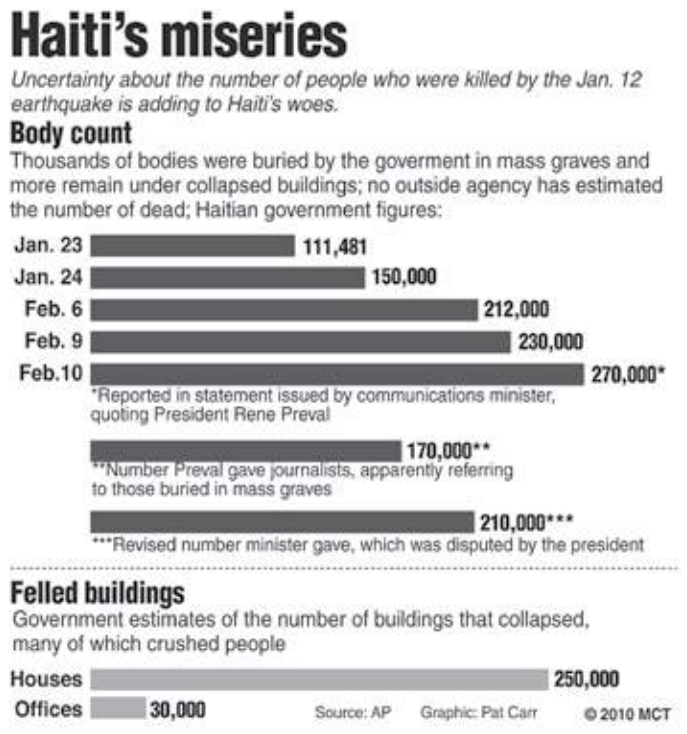
■ ■ ■

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—The 10 U.S. missionaries charged with kidnapping for trying to take a busload of children out of Haiti should be released from jail while an investigation continues, a Haitian judge said Thursday, giving the Americans their best news since their arrests nearly two weeks ago.

Judge Bernard Saint-Vil has the final word on whether to free the missionaries, though he gave the prosecutor-general the opportunity to raise objections. He said he was accepting defense attorneys' request to provisionally free the Americans while an investigation of the case continues.

■ ■ ■

One month after 40 seconds of terrifying shaking killed more than 200,000 of their relatives and neighbors and leveled most of their capital, Haiti's endlessly resilient people are struggling to recreate their lives.


Haiti's miseries
Uncertainty about the number of people who were killed by the Jan. 12 earthquake is adding to Haiti's woes.
Body count
Thousands of bodies were buried by the goverment in mass graves and more remain under collapsed buildings; no outside agency has estimated the number of dead; Haitian government figures:
Jan. 23 111,481
Jan. 24 150,000
Feb. 6 212,000
Feb. 9 230,000
Feb.10 270,000*
*Reported in statement issued by communications minister, quoting President Rene Preval
170,000**
**Number Preval gave journalists, apparently referring to those buried in mass graves
210,000***
***Revised number minister gave, which was disputed by the president
Felled buildings
Government estimates of the number of buildings that collapsed, many of which crushed people
Houses 250,000
Offices 30,000
Source: AP Graphic: Pat Carr © 2010 MCT

Food has yet to reach all of the 3 million people who need it. Infrastructure problems and supply backlogs continue to hamper an international aid effort that has drawn $537 million from the United States alone. Schools remain closed. And on Thursday morning, in a taste of the new horrors the impending rainy season promises to bring, an early morning downpour muddied the dirt in which 1.2 million people have pitched makeshift camp.

Downtown, hundreds of Haitians marched Thursday from the destroyed National Palace to the temporary government headquarters demanding the resignation of President Rene Preval, who has been largely out of sight since the catastrophe. He appeared Wednesday to bicker publicly with his own communications minister over the death toll.

Amid the chaos and unmet needs, there are obvious signs of progress: The United Nations, itself devastated by the quake, has established a tent-and-trailer city on the airport grounds to coordinate the efforts of 900 aid agencies who finally appear to be overcoming huge problems with communications, transportation and infrastructure.

Iran marks revolution with crackdown on protests

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—The Iranian security forces unleashed a crushing sweep against opposition protesters on Thursday as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad used the 31st anniversary of the Islamic revolution to defy the West and boast his country was now a "nuclear state."

The massive show of force appeared to give authorities the upper hand on the most important day of the Iranian political calendar. The state-backed rally dwarfed anti-government gatherings, which were far smaller than other outpourings of dissent in recent months.

Police clashed with anti-government protesters in several sites around Tehran, firing tear gas to disperse them and paintballs to mark them for arrest. Gangs of hard-liners also attacked senior opposition figures - including the wife of the head of the reform movement.

Still, the day's events showed that authorities must rely on full-scale pressures to keep a lid on demonstrations, and any breathing room may be limited. Opposition supporters are certain to regroup and look for weak spots in the ruling system.

In his address to a crowd of hundreds of thousands - many bused into Tehran's Freedom Square—Ahmadinejad sought to shift attention from the nation's political troubles, boasting instead about Iran's advancements in nuclear technology. He also dismissed new U.S. sanctions and denigrated President Barack Obama's efforts to repair relations.

WORLD BRIEFS

Anti-Chavez director leaves Venezuela TV channel

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—Venezuela's only television channel that remains critical of President Hugo Chavez has announced the departure of its director, a strident detractor of the government. Globovision vowed to maintain its tough editorial line as the nation's only remaining anti-Chavez channel, but declined to say why Alberto Federico Ravell was leaving. Ravell denied he stepped down as director voluntarily, saying in a message sent through the Twitter social network that the channel's board of directors pressured him to quit. "They asked for my resignation. I did not resign," Ravell said in a tweet.

Argentina blocks supply ship in Falklands dispute

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP)—Argentina has escalated its dispute with Britain over oil and gas exploration in the South Atlantic, blocking a ship from leaving with equipment it said would have been used to support drilling around the Falkland Islands. Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana met Thursday to press the issue with the governor of Tierra del Fuego province, which, on every schoolchild's map in this South American nation, includes the islands the Argentines call Las Malvinas. "Great Britain is violating Argentine sovereignty," Gov. Fabiana Rios declared after the meeting. The Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that port officials prevented the vessel from leaving because of evidence that the cargo of Argentine-made seamless tubes would be used for drilling activity "illegitimately promoted" by Britain.

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

Saturday, February 13, 2010

RP massacre victim's kin escape attack

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Police fatally shot a man Thursday who allegedly tried to snatch a daughter of a politician whose family members were among 57 people killed late last year in the Philippines' worst political massacre, officials said.

Esmael Mangudadatu, a gubernatorial candidate in the southern Philippines, was in a mall in Davao city when a man tried to kidnap one of his two daughters, an 11-year-old, police said.

A police officer assigned as Mangudadatu's security detail ran to the girl's rescue and in an ensuing scuffle for the officer's pistol the suspect was shot dead five times, said provincial police chief Pedro Tango.

Mangudadatu, however, told reporters that he was the purported target of the attack. He said the assailant was one of the gunmen wanted by authorities in connection with the Nov. 23 massacre, when a group of his supporters, family and journalists were slain as they traveled to file his candidacy papers in Maguindanao province ahead of May elections.

Prosecutors filed charges early this week against the head of a powerful clan and 195 others in the biggest and deadliest murder case since the country's World War II war crimes trials.

The indictment said Andal Ampatuan Sr. and the others were part of a conspiracy to ambush and kill members of the rival Mangudadatu family and supporters. Mangudadatu's wife, two sisters and several other relatives were among the 57 dead.

The massacre was unprecedented in the Philippines, despite its notoriety for election violence and political killings that have claimed hundreds of lives this decade alone.

Police operatives guard a shopping mall in Davao city in southern Philippines late Thursday Feb. 11, 2010, after a man, who allegedly tried to snatch a daughter of politician Esmael Mangudadatu, whose family was among 57 people massacred late last year, was fatally shot, officials said.

AP

Philippines launches program to address killings

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines launched a European-funded program Thursday to reduce the country's large number of extralegal killings and disappearances of activists, journalists and union workers.

The European Union has pledged €3.9 million ($5.36 million) for the EU-Philippines Justice Support Program to provide technical aid and training to bolster the country's criminal justice system.

Foreign and local human rights groups have accused the military of targeting left-wing activists as part of a campaign to wipe out communist rebels who have been fighting a low-level insurgency for more than 40 years.

The Brussels-based watchdog International Federation of Journalists has listed 106 journalists who have been killed in the country since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took office in 2001.

EU Ambassador Alistair MacDonald said the killings and disappearances have "risked sullying the country's reputation internationally, as well as working to diminish the voice of the Philippines in the field of human rights."

He said a key indicator of the program's success would be a decline in the number of killings and an increase in the number of cases brought to justice—a goal which the Philippines accepted when it signed the agreement to create the program.

The 18-month program will be led by Metlev Mehlis, a senior prosecutor from Germany who earlier served as U.N. special investigator on the tribunal investigating the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Mehlis said his team will provide training and assistance to investigative agencies like the police and National Bureau of Investigation, and seek to strengthen the independent Commission on Human Rights and help the Philippines create a monitoring system for extralegal killings.

The military in the past has said some soldiers may have been involved in the killings but most were the result of internal fighting within the underground communist movement.

Local human rights group Karapatan says more than 1,000 people have been executed since 2001, most of them activists and farmers.

Philippine Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who also heads a presidential human rights committee, said the government has confirmed 156 killings since 2001. He said the killings have declined from 41 in 2006—the highest level since 2001—to seven in 2008.

Ermita said 16 people have been convicted so far in 10 cases.

"Let there be no doubt about the seriousness of the Philippine government's resolve to address these human rights issues," Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said.

RP Consulate General to provide services one Sunday every month

The Philippine Consulate General on Saipan will be open one Sunday every month starting February 2010.

"This is part of the improvement of services that the consulate is undertaking for the current year. Several Filipinos in the CNMI have indicated that they have difficulty in going to the consulate during weekdays due to their work schedules," a statement from the consulate read.

For the first six months of 2010, the Consulate General will be open on the following dates—Feb. 28, March 28, April 25, May 30, and June 27.

During these dates, the consulate shall observe its usual office hours from 9am to 4pm. The Sunday schedule is another improvement after the Consulate General allowed the use of special mailing services of the U.S. Postal Service to obtain Philippine passports.

For the use of the mail to obtain passports, call the consulate for details. Personal appearance is still required in the application for passports. The schedule for the second half of the year will be announced later. ***(PR)***

Villar on Madrigal: I'll refer her to my barber

By MICHAEL LIM UBAC
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

STA. ROSA CITY—He could give her a tip or two whenever she's having a bad hair day checking out the price of galunggong.

Nacionalista Party (NP) standard-bearer Sen. Manny Villar on Thursday made what was perhaps his most "cutting" remark in retaliation for the repeated attacks he got from a rival during Monday's Inquirer-sponsored presidential debate.

"I will just refer her to my barber. She said she likes my hair," Villar told reporters covering his campaign sortie here, referring to arch-critic Sen. Maria Ana Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal.

Asked in the Inquirer debate if there was anything nice she could say about Villar, Madrigal then merely quipped in Filipino: "His dyed hair looks good."

Snide remarks

It was just one of the several snide comments Madrigal directed at Villar onstage. At one point, though, Madrigal herself drew snickers when she was reduced to making a wild guess and giving an excuse for not knowing the current price of a fish associated with the poor man's diet.

Villar

Villar on Thursday visited public markets here and also went on a road show in the neighboring towns of Sta. Rosa, Biñan and Cabuyao.

As he pressed flesh at a wet market in Biñan, he deliberately lingered longer at one of the seafood stalls and gamely posed for press photographers.

The stall was selling, among others, fresh galunggong.

Villar also shot back at Madrigal's insinuation that his wife, Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar, could form half of a "conjugal dictatorship" once her billionaire-husband had made it to Malacañang.

Madrigal

"You know, her attacks have multiplied and are now even directed at my wife. As a couple, we are close. We were classmates in college [at the University of the Philippines]," he said.

"But all of our friends can say that my wife doesn't meddle [in my affairs] in politics," he added.

Madrigal on Wednesday described Representative Villar as "the brains and the brawn behind" the NP candidate and urged voters to "be vigilant in not allowing this dangerous man to become president."

Jamby's platform

Asked if he would regard Madrigal to be a really serious presidential contender, Villar replied: "Not really. Whatever her role [in this election] is okay with me. I, too, wish for her happiness."

In a statement, the Nacionalista Party noted that Madrigal seemed to have "made it her campaign platform to attack the integrity of Villar."

"But the former Senate President and House Speaker refuses to reciprocate the political mudslinging, even if Madrigal had recently assailed the role of his wife in his political career."

COMELEC STRIKES AGAIN

Arroyo ally in; Panlilio out

By KRISTINE L. ALAVE
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines— What's in a name?

For Lilia Pineda, a close ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo popularly known as "Nanay Baby," it meant finally getting the gubernatorial seat of Pampanga.

On Thursday, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) unseated Pampanga Gov. Eddie "Among Ed" Panlilio, a Catholic priest-turned-politician, and declared Pineda, whose husband is widely known as a "jueteng," or illegal numbers, kingpin, the winner of the 2007 elections.

The Comelec Second Division said Pineda, a former provincial board member, was the "duly elected governor" of Pampanga after an appreciation of the votes from 21 towns and cities in the province showed that she had an edge of 2,011 votes over Panlilio.

"I don't know if I'll be happy or sad," Pineda said. With an expected appeal, she said the case was far from resolved.

"I'm not even giving it attention," she added.

"A priest has no capability to harass," Panlilio countered. "A candidate with no party in 2007 does not have the machinery to cheat and buy votes."

Malacañang urged the parties to abide by the Comelec ruling.

Panlilio

"We accept the wisdom and discretion of the Comelec," said Gary Olivar, deputy presidential spokesperson. "We urge everyone to get into the habit of respecting due process whether we like it or not."

It was the latest in a string of controversial decisions that the Comelec Second Division had issued. It earlier annulled the win in the 2007 vote of Bulacan Gov. Joselito Mendoza and kicked out the polio-stricken Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca. The two belong to the opposition.

In reaching the decision, the Comelec division considered as valid the votes for "Nanay Baby" that were previously set aside, giving Pineda the gubernatorial seat three months before the May 10 general elections, where the two will again face off for the same post.

The ruling penned by Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer said that Pineda got 190,729 votes, while Panlilio received 188,718 votes, which erased his 1,147 lead in the 2007 count.

Different counts

The appreciation of the votes was not unanimous among the three members of the division, however.

Commissioner Lucenito Tagle had a different computation of the contested votes.

Tagle, in his separate concurring opinion, said Pineda was still the victor in the 2007 race at 190,819 votes, but her lead was much smaller.

He placed Panlilio's total votes at 190,463, putting the difference between the rivals a mere 356 votes.

The different counts were a positive thing for Panlilio, according to his lawyer, Sixto Brillantes. He said that he would question the appreciation of votes in his appeal.

With the ruling, the Comelec ordered Panlilio to leave his post and allow Pineda to take over as governor.

Final and executory

The decision was final and executory, but the Comelec gave Panlilio five days to file a motion for reconsideration with the commission en banc.

On August last year, the Comelec began to open the ballots from all the precincts in Pampanga for the recount ordered by the Supreme Court two years after Pineda filed her electoral protest.

Pineda, whose husband was previously investigated for his jueteng connections, accused Panlilio of harassment and cheating in the 2007 balloting.

The 11,000-page ruling detailed objections and questions on each of the votes cast for the candidates. The objections ranged from anomalous markings on the ballots to questions on the registered nicknames of the candidates.

The election commissioners looked at each issue raised and decided whether to deny or allow the vote for the candidate.

'Forces of darkness'

Pineda's lawyer George Garcia said the appeal centered on getting the board of election inspectors to include votes cast for "Nanay Baby" which were previously disallowed.

The revision of the ballots aimed to ensure that votes cast for Pineda under this nickname were counted, Garcia explained.

Philippine prosecutors charge 43 suspected rebels

AP

Relatives try to hold back tears as they show pictures of their loved ones, among the 43 who have been taken to military custody, during a press conference in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines, on Sunday Feb. 7, 2010.

MANILA, Philippines (AP)— Philippine prosecutors Thursday charged 43 people arrested when troops interrupted alleged communist rebel training although they claim they were medical volunteers and have been tortured by the military.

Allegations of torture and illegal arrest led the Philippine Supreme Court to order the military to present the accused at a hearing Friday.

The military accused the group of belonging to the New People's Army, the armed wing of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines, which has waged a 41-year insurgency that has been marked by human rights abuses and has stunted economic development.

The 43 were charged with illegal possession of weapons and explosives after Rizal provincial police chief Jonathan Miano said security forces found three handguns, three grenades and six homemade bombs in the raid on a compound where the group said it was holding a medical training seminar.

Relatives of the accused and lawyers said the suspects are not rebels but volunteer health workers serving impoverished communities with very few government medical workers.

In a statement, the lawyers said soldiers and police planted the evidence. They also questioned the search warrant, saying it was directed at a person who wasn't among the 43 and was issued by a judge from another province.

The suspects were held incommunicado, kept blindfolded, and denied legal counsel, a violation of their constitutional rights, said Edre Olalia of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers.

Maj. Gen. Jorge Segovia, commander of the 2nd Infantry Division that has custody of the suspects, denied anyone was tortured. He said they "suffered mental anguish" caused by their arrest. He did not elaborate.

The blindfolds were necessary to prevent them from planning an escape or resistance, Segovia said.

Give up your haciendas, Aquino, Roxas told

By MICHAEL LIM UBAC
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SEN. LOREN LEGARDA, guest candidate for vice president of the Nacionalista Party (NP), on Thursday challenged Liberal Party (LP) standard-bearer Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III and his running mate, Sen. Mar Roxas, to distribute the haciendas owned by their wealthy families to their tenants now.

Legarda was reacting to Aquino's promise to distribute Hacienda Luisita, his family's 6,419-hectare sugar estate in Tarlac, to its tenants in five years.

"What do you mean feed the poor five years from now? They will be long-dead when that time comes. The poor farmers who need land to till should have been given land yesterday, not tomorrow," said Legarda, running mate of Sen. Manuel Villar who is Aquino's most formidable rival for the presidency.

She told reporters at a press conference in Pasay City that she was not advocating government confiscation of the vast tracts of land owned by the Cojuangco clan, of which Aquino is a member, and the Araneta clan, which counts Roxas as a scion.

Genuine land reform

Legarda, chair of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, dared Aquino and Roxas to end poverty and hunger by instituting genuine agrarian reform.

"If they really care for the poor and understand agrarian reform, the lands under their ownership should have been redistributed a long time ago in accordance with the agrarian reform law enacted under the Aquino administration," she said, referring to the term of President Cory Aquino, Senator Aquino's late mother.

"How can you prove you are pro-poor if you cannot even show transparency in the Hacienda Luisita and Araneta-Roxas records? How can you take care of the poor when you don't know what they need?

"These herederos (heirs) didn't have to work a day in their life. They do not know how it is to rise from poverty in Tondo or Malabon. They do not understand the value of hard work and perseverance," she said.

'Working class'

Villar hails from the impoverished Tondo district of Manila, while Legarda comes from nearby flood-prone Malabon.

"Manny and I come from the working class. I have been working since I was 15. Manny sold shrimp as a boy. We know how it is to work. Those who promise change in five years are those who obviously do not understand poverty," she said.

Legarda also called on all candidates to provide institutionalized long-term reforms instead of Band-Aid solutions to the problems of the country.

"They should not make promises for the purpose of campaigning. People are starving. The plight of farmers continues up to this day. Farmers are killed, hurt and harassed. The landless must be given land. This is what the law says," she said.

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PNR gets $110M for Manila-Bicol line

HOT BALLOON FESTIVAL AP

A paraglider hovers as hot air balloons take off to "chase" the lead balloon at the start of the four-day Philippine Hot Air Balloon festival at Clark Economic Zone, Angeles city in Pampanga province, north of Manila, Philippine Thursday Feb. 11, 2010. The annual festival attracted 22 hot air balloons from different countries as Japan, Germany, Poland and Malaysia.

LEGAZPI CITY—The Philippine National Railways (PNR) is getting $110 million from Korea to finish the rehabilitation of its Manila-Bicol line, a PNR official said on Wednesday.

Nicholas Priela, PNR chief executive, said the loan will come from the Korea Exim Bank and could be released anytime.

Two projects will be funded by the loan—the Northrail-Southrail Linkage Project Phase II and the Bicol Commuter Service (BCS).

The BCS will provide commuter train services from Tagkawayan, Quezon to Guinobatan, Albay.

Ongoing works include construction of two rail bridges—San Cristobal and Travesia, replacement of wood ties with concrete ones, installation of communication lines between Quezon and Albay, and repair of two locomotives and five coaches.

The Naga PNR station, said Priela, has been improved. Commuter train services are currently being provided from the station covering the Ligao-Naga-Sipocot route.

PNR has relocated 34,718 squatters from railways to resettlement sites in Bulacan, Cavite, Muntinlupa and Laguna.

Priela said PNR, although operating only with a P135 million budget, has been meeting its yearly targets.

Last year, he said, revenue from railway operations grossed P17.4 million from P15.4 million in 2008.

PNR, he said, needs to spend at least P1.25 billion to restore full operations of its Manila-Legazpi line for passengers and freight.

The Southrail project was designed to complement a more controversial project started during the time of former President Fidel Ramos, the NorthRail.

NorthRail was designed to connect Metro Manila with the Clark International Airport but its construction has suffered hitches along the way, among them rising costs of materials.

It also ran into a wall of controversy after the Senate investigated allegations that the project, to be financed by the Chinese government and built by a Chinese firm, was overpriced.

Drought causes P1-B loss in Isabela as farmers despair

ILAGAN, Isabela—After surveying his two-hectare corn farm in Barangay Lullutan here on Thursday, Edgardo Bayucan, 45, gave up any hope of saving his crops from the prolonged drought brought by the El Niño weather phenomenon.

"I surrender. There is no remedy, my crops have been destroyed by the drought," he told the Inquirer.

Bayucan and at least 30,000 other corn and palay farmers in Isabela have been hurt most by the drought, records from the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the province showed.

The DA has started distributing water pumps to draw out underground water to help the farmers.

The Isabela provincial board this week approved a recommendation to place the province under a state of calamity after the DA reported drought-related losses of at least P1.61 billion in farms in 36 towns and a city.

Vice Gov. Ramon Reyes said the board made the move to allow Gov. Grace Padaca to use 5 percent of the calamity fund, amounting to P60 million, to help farmers whose farms were hit by the drought.

In a hectare, Bayucan said he had spent P20,000 for seeds, fertilizer, pesticide, fees for planters and weeders, and fuel.

He said he would not use diesel engine pumps or shallow wells as these would be costly.

"We might end up poorer during harvest time," he said.

Provincial agriculture officials, however, are hopeful that the drought's impact can be reduced by the use of shallow tube wells.

Provincial agriculturist Danilo Tumamao said at least 60 water pumps have been distributed to local farmers and the DA is preparing to distribute more units soon.

Officials said no rain has fallen in the province for almost a month.

Tumamao said cloud-seeding operations done in the province in the past two weeks were insufficient to ease the effects of the drought.

Michael Hosillos, SN-Aboitiz external relations chief, has urged farmers and residents in the province to conserve water because of the low water level at the Magat Dam, the major power and irrigation water provider in Cagayan Valley.

"We have limited power generation because of very low water level. This is a cause for concern," he said.

In Cagayan, Gov. Alvaro Antonio said the small water impounding dams in Alcala and Enrile towns have helped some farmers cope with the drought.

Antonio said the provincial government is helping farmers build at least 100 water impounding dams in different towns.

TAKE CHARGE

Celebrate Valentine's Day without overspending

Question: Valentine's Day is coming up and I'm a bit hesitant to take my wife out to a nice dinner and concert as we have been doing so for the past five years. But where it used to cost only around P2,000 to do both, now concert tickets alone cost P2,000 - for one ticket! Is there a way we can celebrate in style without spending too much?-Gilbert

Answer: Valentine's Day is the one day in a year when couples get the license to be extra romantic and express their love. Although every day could be Valentine's Day for any loving couple, as it is a day of love, there's nothing like being one with the world in celebrating love day. And since almost all women look forward to this special day, we have a hunch your wife may be expecting something special with you on that day.

So instead of being like Grinch on Christmas Day, try to be the Valentino you were meant to be - just in your own style. That you are conscious of your budgetary constraints is good: this will help you find more creative ways in celebrating Valentine's Day.

Here are some suggestions on how you can celebrate V Day this year without overspending:

1 Find out how much budget you can have for Valentine's Day. You don't have to follow your five-year-old tradition of a nice dinner and a concert this year. With your budget in mind, set limits on how you will spend your resources. Instead of a dinner at a five-star hotel or a hip new restaurant, maybe a quiet dinner in a more reasonable restaurant would be more favorable. Lunch would be even cheaper, but can still be romantic with the right ambience.

2 Time to redeem your rewards. If your credit card gives loyalty points for purchases made, check how much you've earned. Who knows, you might already be entitled to a gift certificate to a spa or a restaurant. Citi cardholders can choose to redeem from printed and online catalogues that offer a wide array of appliances, electronic gadgets, shopping and dining certificates even air miles you can use for a free trip. Or they can redeem at partner stores nationwide and use their points for as much as 50% of their bill. If you have a Citi card, that's half the spend you need to make.

3 Order flowers straight from the source. Go to the flower market in Dangwa in Manila, for instance, to get a fresh bouquet of flowers as you will get it at a cheaper price than at the mall. And instead of the usual red roses, try other flowers that are just as beautiful but cost less. Check out Manila Seedling Bank, too, for flowers.

4 Browse the newspapers and Internet for announcements of free concerts and events on Valentine's Day. Not all V Day events charge tickets. Just look around.

5 Have a picnic at the park. Cook your own food at home to save more, then head to public parks such as La Mesa Ecopark or Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Nature Center, both in Quezon City, for some quiet time together.

6 Visit museums. Have an art-filled day by going to the National Museum and other museums around town, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Manila and Bahay Tsinoy in Manila, Ayala Museum in Makati, Jorge Vargas Museum in Quezon City, and Bencab Museum in Benguet. Entrance fees do not cost an arm and a leg, and the visual feast cum cultural exposure will be good for both of you.

7 Pay the neighborhood spa a visit. Treat your wife and yourself to a couple's massage at your neighborhood spa. Rates will be cheaper than at big name spas in malls, which would also be crowded on Valentine's Day. Or how about a home spa massage? Call your neighborhood spa for home service.

8 Take a drive out of town. Why not take the day off and head to Tagaytay for breakfast or lunch? There are a lot of good restaurants there that are pocket-friendly, and with a good view of Taal Volcano, romance is in the air.

As you can see, you can celebrate Valentine's Day with any budget in mind. Have fun!

Maharlika – PinoyStyle

Juday, Ryan are dead set on a baby

By MARINEL CRUZ
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—Judy Ann Santos and husband Ryan Agoncillo are dead set on having a baby soon.

Juday told Inquirer Entertainment that they are planning to take a month-long vacation starting in April—"probably in the Caribbean"—for a second honeymoon.

"We're very excited," said Juday. "Ryan deserves a break more than I do. I'd never seen him work so hard as in this past year."

Ryan co-hosts the noontime show "Eat … Bulaga!" on GMA 7 and the talent search "Talentadong Pinoy" on TV5.

"We're still planning our trip, checking where our budget will take us," Juday said during a gathering to launch her newest ABS-CBN teleserye, "Habang May Buhay." Gusto ko iba naman, somewhere there's no traffic."

Juday said the thought of taking a leave made her sad, since it would take her away from their 5-year-old adopted daughter Johanna Lois or Yohan.

"But if we bring her along, paano kami makakagawa ng kasunod?" the actress jested. "I've been receiving a lot of tips on how to get pregnant. I'm trying very hard not to feel pressured. If I don't get pregnant this year, I guess it means Ryan and I need to save up some more for the baby."

Juday's teleserye, which finally aired on Feb. 1, took three years to finish. "I have to admit that I felt bad about the delay. 'Di maiwasan ang tampo. Other artists also experience this. I'm just one of those who aren't afraid to talk about it publicly," she said. "In all fairness to my bosses in ABS-CBN, they were very apologetic. I guess they just wanted the show to be perfect."

Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo.

The teleserye had the working title "Himala," with Andoy Ranay, Mark Meily and John Lazatin at the helm, when it was first launched in 2007. ABS-CBN management said it did not want viewers to think that it was a remake of the Nora Aunor starrer, so it was changed to "Humingi Ako sa Langit." Directors Rechie del Carmen and Malou Sevilla took over the project.

Totally new

In the last quarter of 2009, management decided to scrap the project and start anew, this time, under the direction of Wenn Deramas.

"I chose not to look at what the other directors did. In a way, that's less stressful for me. What we are offering the viewers is a totally new material," said Deramas.

The show is the country's first medical drama. "Each week we present a case and attempt to solve it. The case is explained in a manner that the masses will easily understands," the director said.

Deramas said he was thankful for the chance to work on a dramatic vehicle. "My first project was a drama show, 'Mula sa Puso' in 1999," Deremas said. "With very little direction from me, Juday gives me what I want. The same goes for Gina (Alajar), Rio (Locsin) and Gladys (Reyes)."

"Habang May Buhay" also stars Derek Ramsay, Joem Bascon, Will Devaughn and Tetchie Agbayani.

'Muziklaban' stages loud but tuneful acts

MANILA, Philippines—On its 11th year, "Muziklaban," the country's long-running showcase of Pinoy metal rock, has expanded its attractions to include awards in extreme sports, skin art and indie films.

In the past, this annual gathering of metal-influenced bands and fans was top-billed by foreign acts such as Sepultura.

In the latest "Muziklaban Grand Finals Night" held recently at Metrowalk Open Parking Area, five amateur bands vied for top honors and recognition after besting thousands of hopefuls across the archipelago in a series of local and regional eliminations.

The event was a culmination of the "Muziklaban Rock Challenge" in search of the next generation of Pinoy bands.

In the ultimate showdown, Hatankaru from Valenzuela City struck gold with its exciting funk-soul update reminiscent of POT. Opening with a grinding funky number, "Lakip," Hatankaru followed it up with "Larawan," a rock jam that echoed Razorback.

The four-member group capped its three-song run with a crowd-pleasing cover of POT's "Ulitin."

Formed in 2004, Hatankaru is composed of vocalist Roy Elinzano, bassist Michael Villaflores, drummer Elmer Glino and guitarist Gilbert Pacariem. The band's name, coined by its original bass player, was derived by jumbling the spelling of Karuhatan—the town where the group hails from. The members said they were on the verge of disbanding when "Muziklaban" organizers came calling.

Hoodswhite from Cagayan de Oro City played true to the competition's predilection towards extreme, unpredictable and intense music. Its members showed up in makeup a la Kiss and delivered a jaw-dropping set of de-tuned Goth and death metal rock numbers.

The good news is that the vocalists of the contending finalists could actually sing, their voices roaring loud and clear above the din of their bands' typical three-guitar setup.

Second Squad from Baguio offered an original composition, "Venus," which sounded ready for the big league, especially with the rock star performance of its lead singer.

Hatankaru received a cash prize of P500,000 tax-free, a record deal and bragging rights as this year's "Muziklaban" champs. The band joins the select company of currently popular Pinoy rock acts and past Muziklaban top dogs Mayonnaise, HardBoiled Eggz, Gayuma and Even.

In between numbers by the contest finalists, guest bands sustained the excitement level. Intolerant kept to its signature blast of tinnitus-inducing, yet melodic, death metal.

Slapshock proved its rap-metal past could be re-tooled to the same mighty voltage as its current heavy hitter, "Cariño Brutal." ***(PDI)***

Are Edu, Pinky still a couple?

By DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—An ABS-CBN News & Public Affairs insider insists there is no truth to the buzz that Ted Failon and Pinky Webb are now a couple.

"I think Edu Manzano and Pinky Webb are still together but they are just keeping it hush-hush so Pinky won't have to go on leave because of Edu's candidacy. The rumor about Ted and Pinky is just meant to drum up their radio program."

I texted Edu about this. His reply: "Hi Dolly. Out of the profound respect I have for Pinky, her family, and the network, I would rather not comment on that. I hope you and IC are doing well."

No can do, Edu?

At the taping of "Bandaoke," Carlene Aguilar mistook "Starstruck" avenger Zeryll Lim for Cristine Reyes. She had to ask the show's staff if it was Cristine or not. She was relieved to find out that it was just Cristine's look-alike. "Kinabahan naman ako bigla," she uttered.

Edu Manzano and Pinky Webb.

Their tiff over Dennis Trillo happened many controversies ago but I guess the sight of Cristine would, indeed, open old wounds.

Sometimes we think things are over but we don't feel that it's really finished. When our heart and mind don't speak the same language, we badly need an interpreter.

I heard that my favorite late-night weekend newscaster will soon be out of a program. Many of my friends have often wondered why the Kapuso network has not given this pretty anchor the kind of break she deserves. Even relegated to a 12:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday slot, she has actually inspired a number of fans to form not one, but two clubs.

Stars endorsing candidates asked to go on leave

By LEILA SALAVERRIA
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—Will Dolphy, Kris and Willie go missing from their shows soon?

Endorsing candidates has its price for actors, columnists and other mass media personalities: they would have to resign or take a leave from their TV shows or media outfits during the campaign period, based on the Fair Election Act, according to the poll watchdog Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV).

The Commission on Elections says it is prepared to implement this provision of the law and will ask media personalities who are part of a politician's campaign to take leave from work or compel their employers to make them take some time off, according to its law department director, Ferdinand Rafanan.

Rafanan said that "endorsing is campaigning," when asked if being an endorser is equivalent to working for a candidate.

Section 6 (6.6) of the Fair Election Act or Republic Act 9006 states: "Any mass media columnist, commentator, announcer, reporter, on-air correspondent or personality who is a candidate for any elective public office or is a campaign volunteer for or employed or retained in any capacity by any candidate or political party shall be deemed resigned, if so required by their employer, or shall take a leave of absence from his/her work as such during the campaign period."

The Comelec essentially repeated the same provision in its February 4 resolution that provided the implementing rules of RA 9006.

The provision is intended to prevent any candidate from benefitting unduly from the exposure of the media personality endorsing him or her.

Manzano to Comelec: Let celebrities work on campaign period

MANILA, Philippines—Lakas-Kampi-CMD vice-presidential candidate Edu Manzano has asked the Commission on Elections to allow him and other showbiz candidates and endorsers to resume their work during the campaign season.

Manzano's lawyer, Romulo Macalintal, submitted a letter to poll chairman Jose Melo on Friday requesting the Comelec to reconsider its resolution requiring "mass media columnist, announcer, or personality to take a leave of absence" if he has endorsed or was working for a candidate.

Manzano said the provision, under Resolution 8758, deprived actors of their livelihood. It also breaches their freedom of expression, the actor and host said. "Pending the resolution of this request, it is also respectfully requested that the implementation of Section of 36 of Comelec Resolution No. 8758 dated Feb. 4, 2010 be temporarily suspended," he said.

Maharlika – Opinyon

EDITORIAL

Villar's challenge

At Monday's *Inquirer* presidential debate, Sen. Manny Villar offered a simple but powerful defense of his heavy ad spending. Then he pivoted and issued an even more forceful challenge to his rivals for the presidency. His words are worth quoting in full: "Pera ko naman ang ginagastos ko. Napakahalaga, tanungin din natin, hindi lamang kung magkano na ang nagastos, kundi sino ang nagbibigay sa kanila, dahil baka ito ang ihinalal nating pangulo, at hindi yung nakaharap dito."(A close translation: It's my money that I'm using. It's very important [that] we should also ask, not only how much has been spent, but who is giving [money] to them, because these may be the ones we elect as president, and not the one facing [us] here.)

His challenge, however, is not without complications. It is true that, with the possible exception of Eduardo Cojuangco in 1992 and Juan Ponce Enrile in 1998, Villar is the first nationally known political figure to run for the presidency entirely on his own money. But it is only natural to ask: How does he intend to recover all the money he will spend?

We do not underestimate the public appeal of a self-funded campaign. If Villar succeeds, he will be the first president to arrive in Malacañang financially beholden to no one. (At the height of the Noynoy Aquino euphoria, late last year, the possibility of a people-funded campaign, and thus a president-elect with no major financial debts of gratitude, also animated the Liberal Party.) Philippine polity has not yet reached a sufficient level of maturity to subsidize the cost of party-based elections with counterpart public money; perhaps before then, a self-funded campaign (or one entirely supported by small donations from a broad spectrum of citizens) is the best means to negate the influence of vested interests.

Also, we should also point out that Sen. Mar Roxas, Aquino's vice-presidential candidate, started pulling away from Sen. Loren Legarda in surveys tracking the vice-presidential contest precisely at the time his camp started investing again in advertising campaigns. Indeed, Roxas ("Mr. Palenge," who placed first) and Sen. Jamby Madrigal ("Ja-ja-ja-jamby," who placed fourth) massively outspent all other candidates for the Senate in 2004. In other words, Roxas shares with Villar a track record of heavy campaign spending.

This was a point raised at the Inquirer debate against Madrigal, one of 10 officially accredited candidates for the presidency. Didn't you yourself use a celebrity endorser when you first ran for the Senate? she was asked. Madrigal, a surprisingly nimble speaker, responded by striking a contrite note, saying she has seen the folly of her ways. That expensive foolishness, however, spelled the difference between victory in 2004 and defeat in her first run for the Senate in 2001.

Heavy ad spending, in sum, is a sin that covers a multitude of sinners.

What really concerns us, though, is the sheer magnitude of Villar's spending. Again, it is only natural to ask, How will he recoup his investment? "Pera ko naman ang ginagastos ko." Precisely. Not even the notoriously generous variety show host Willie Revillame gives away millions of pesos of his own money (it only looks that way). Villar needs to convince the public that he is, in fact, one of a kind, and can give away hundreds of millions, perhaps even the billions that political analysts say are needed to finance a presidential run, away, without thought of recompense.

In other words, at such levels of spending, Villar faces the prospect of himself becoming a vested interest.

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How to become invisible

Looking Back
By AMBETH OCAMPO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

There was a time when Gilda Cordero Fernando infected me with her interest in Philippine folklore. She told me about some graduate courses in UP being taught by Damiana Eugenio, E. Arsenio Manuel (1909-2003) and Fr. Francisco Demetrio, SJ (1920-1996). These three, together with Maximo D. Ramos, wrote the standard works found in bibliographies of any serious research on Philippine folklore, so I decided to visit Diliman one Saturday to see what was showing. Unfortunately, Miss Eugenio was not teaching that term, so I just bought her books. Dr. Manuel was teaching a course on Philippine Pre-History, and Father Demetrio had a seminar on folklore.

You were better off reading Manuel than sitting in his classroom. Even better was chatting with him in the Faculty Center canteen because he was hard of hearing and you had to shout in his right ear to be heard.

Father Demetrio's class was engaging, but I couldn't concentrate on his lecture. I was distracted by a brown paper bag he had on the table. This brown bag contained: a can of Coke, an orange and a handful of hard candies. Two hours into a graduate class made my stomach rumble and I was fixated on the brown paper bag that was only to be opened in the unlikely event that Father Demetrio's blood sugar dropped.

Demetrio published a four-volume "Dictionary of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs" (1970) and a two-volume "Encyclopedia of Philippine Folk Beliefs and Customs" (1991). Both are compilations of various beliefs and customs arranged by topic. In the section on amulets and talismans, we find a wide array of weapons against evil. In an age and place where people still believe in witches and aswang, the following were supposed to keep these creatures of midnight at bay: ashes on your doorsteps, sharp objects like bolos and sharpened bamboo called "bagacay" displayed as a warning. You could also keep and or display a broom, bullets, garlic, or ray's tail (buntut pagi) to scare away these creatures. Of course, religious objects like a crucifix, images of saints, holy water, palm blessed on Palm Sunday, Bibles and prayer books could be used but sometimes people made a mixture of: brunt bones, hair, feathers, rubber, holy water. A prayer (oracion) written on paper or packed in black cloth served the same purpose. These things were apotropaic or meant to ward away evil.

Many charms and talismans were charged during Holy Week. A special concoction of oil with assorted roots and herbs placed in a bottle was said to boil and bubble when a witch or aswang was near. If you could recite the "Apostle's Creed" or "Lord's Prayer" backwards, that also did the trick. Burning rubber tires drove witches away (but I must warn that this is bad for the environment and people, too).

Not all charms were against creatures of lower mythology. There were some that brought good fortune, but they were a bit difficult to obtain. For example, you had to find a rat and centipede fighting, if the centipede won you had to catch and dry it. When you went to the cockpit, the dried centipede should be soaked in water which would then be sprinkled on the cock to ensure a victory.

Other lucky charms included mushrooms with three legs (whatever that means) and lizards with two tails.

Some had practical uses. Goat beard when cut and placed in a corner of one's house ensured that the goat would always return home. If you wanted to be waterproof, you needed a charm from a gabi plant. Chicken manure buried in a field would keep chickens away (I thought manure was used as fertilizer).

If you caught a pugo (quail) and rubbed it on your face, you would become invisible. The same for heron's eggs which, according to Rizal in "Noli me tangere," were invisible and could only be seen when these were under water.

Another invisibility amulet required that you bury a black cat and come back a year later during Holy Week to dig it up. If you found one black bone among the remains, that would make you invisible.

The most disgusting way to become invisible was to gather the tongue and small fingers of a dead child that had been buried for three days. But this gruesome amulet only worked with a special "oracion" that is not listed by Demetrio.

To see invisible or unseen beings, you must place cat's mote in your eyes. The same power could be had with dog's mote.

Some of Demetrio's informants suggested the strangest processes: "To protect oneself against thieves, a skull is taken at midnight from the cemetery. The owners of the skull will appear in a dream and tell the holder to pray for nine consecutive nights and to prepare a feast for the dead on the ninth day. If this is fulfilled, the skull in return will help the holder by protecting his house from thieves when he is away. It is said that all loose things inside and outside the house start moving and making noise when a thief is around, thus scaring him away."

And another: "At night, when a star falls or shoots, the belief is that a person acquires a special charm or anting-anting if he can tie a knot on a handkerchief during that very brief fall and before a star or meteor disappears. Or he should run when the star is falling to become a very fast runner."

Most of the data were collected by Demetrio almost 50 years ago. A younger scholar today should begin compiling folk beliefs and customs to see what concerns Filipinos in the 21st century.

Back stage

Pinoy Kasi
By MICHAEL TAN
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely actors," William Shakespeare famously wrote in "As You Like It." He was referring to the six ages we all go through, from infancy to old age, but social scientists developed another insight from Shakespeare's line: the idea that social life is much like theater or drama.

Sociologists like Ervin Goffman write about how our social interactions are social performances, each person using scripts which depend on settings and the other "actors" with us. Goffman also differentiated the "front stage," where we consciously perform before an "audience," with bright lights and cameras, and a "back stage," where we still perform to some extent, but without an audience. Back-stage performances are more spontaneous, less scripted.

Politics does often resemble front-stage performances, a grand production like we saw last Monday at the University of the Philippines with Inquirer's 1st Edition, dubbed a debate of presidential candidates. Front-stage performances are important for winning votes, but ultimately, it is still the back-stage activities—before, during and after the show— that are more important.

I was one of the panelists at the Inquirer-UP event, and thought I'd share some of my thoughts about what went on back stage, the behind-the-scenes stories.

First, I have to congratulate John Nery and the other people at Inquirer who coordinated the whole activity. Poor John had to do a hundred different things, from following up on the candidates (in the end all except Joseph Estrada appeared) to chasing after the panelists, including a Sunday afternoon briefing on the program sequence and our tasks.

I was feeling somewhat anxious after the briefing because I realized the pacing was going to be quite hectic. Each panel (I was in the one on social issues) had three rounds for questioning. We had 30 seconds to ask a question and the candidates had 90 seconds to reply in the first round, 60 seconds in the second and 45 seconds in the third. We could jump in to interrupt, but I knew that was probably going to be impossible with some of the candidates.

Through a complicated round-robin type of questioning, each panelist was assigned eight candidates. In the end, we got seven because of Erap's absence. Just my luck, the one candidate who was not on my list was Gilbert Teodoro.

No OPM

The organizers had excellent guidelines for the panel, two of which were especially important for framing questions: "make it new" and "avoid the plan." "Make it new" meant looking for new angles to issues, while "avoid the plan" meant that we should make the candidates focus on their positions or views, make them take sides, rather than give vague replies about what they planned to do. In other words, we were to force them away from an OPM (Oh Promise Me) routine.

There was a broad script, broken down by minutes, assigning panelists to ask a question of a specific candidate, but the candidates were not given the questions ahead of time. The exchange was left to the panelists and to representatives of various partner organizations, like the Makati Business Club, Philippine Business for Social Progress, Watch Out When Women Vote (WOWW).

There were also hundreds of questions received from readers and other media practitioners, and the Inquirer organizers had to choose a handful, which were then passed on to the panelists. Each of us was allowed to choose up to three questions, which we could modify or integrate into our own questions.

It was difficult thinking up questions, especially using the "avoid the plan" guideline. The morning of the forum, reviewing the readers' questions, I realized that there were no questions about the elderly, so I quickly called the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE) asking what they wanted to ask. The COSE staff told me that the Senior Citizens Act needed to be amended to expand benefits. Vaccines, for example, are not covered by the discounts on medicines. "Buti pa ang mga aso, may libreng bakuna," quipped the COSE staff, referring to free rabies vaccines available for dogs.

I formulated a question for Bro. Eddie Villanueva about expanding benefits for the elderly and he was quick to mention exempting the elderly from paying E-VAT. A bit on the OPM side, but still a good answer.

I regretted asking Jamby Madrigal for her views on stricter laws around food products. Any politician would of course have agreed, but more so Jamby, who, it turns out, is vegetarian. I only found out at the forum when she mentioned it, in defense of her not knowing the price of galunggong and salted eggs.

The galunggong question was a great one, sent in by reader Roberto Reyes of BF Homes in Las Piñas, and I hope similar questions will be thrown at other candidates. I did ask Manny Villar about high rents in public markets and in malls, and he replied that he was not familiar with the current costs but favored more microcredit for small businesses. I would suggest to readers that you ask your other candidates about these rents, which can be very oppressive for small businesses, and totally unaffordable for the informal sector.

In the end, what we had was a forum, rather than a debate. The fact that it was fast-paced meant the candidates had to be fairly knowledgeable about issues. Almost all did well there, although I could sense that at times, some of them would try to buy time by spewing out empty rhetoric or evading the core of the question. An example was an exchange between Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J. and Dick Gordon, with Father Bernas repeating his question three times even after Gordon had answered (or tried to answer).

'Byucon' questions

One of the other panelists, Fe Zamora, told us right before the forum that she had some "beauty contest" questions. Her first one, for Manny Villar, asked what he would choose: power or wealth. I think these byucon (to use the gay slang term) questions should be used more often to "interrogate" our candidates. We need to see beneath the performance and catch them off guard.

Not surprisingly, several candidates were asked about their relatives. Jamby assured the audience her husband would not be like the current First Gentleman. I asked Noynoy about Kris, in the context of the ever-powerful bunso in Filipino families. He assured us that she speaks up about issues like wardrobe, but he has his own mind.

I think we should pursue such questions, and do our own research into the "significant others" in our candidates' lives, be they the mother-in-law (Gibo had said his was No. 1), the siobe (younger sister), or whoever else might be behind the scenes.

People asked me afterwards if the forum helped me decide whom I wanted to support. I'm still non-committal, and as the campaign unfolds, I will do more columns about how we might want to assess the candidates, front-stage and back-stage.

Maharlika – Samu't Sari

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students of Grace Christian Assembly parade around campus in their national costumes as part of the 2009 Missions Convention.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Grace Christian Ministries celebrates 25 years of ministry on Feb. 28. About 300 students are now enrolled in the school, which began as an outreach of Grace Christian Ministries in the mid-1980s.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

JAPAN VISITORS

Saipan Mayor Donald Flores and members from the Saipan Rotary Club join Route Inn members for a group photo at the Japanese Memorial Monument in Marpi after a memorial service.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Route Inn expressed how much they've appreciated the warm hospitality received from the Marianas Visitors Authority and were very thrilled to have the opportunity to meet with Saipan Mayor Donald Flores. The local executive officially welcomed the group and MVA deputy managing director Judy Torres presented a plaque of appreciation to the group for making the CNMI their destination.

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS

Blow out your 18th candle, wish away, you are the superstar of the day! Belated happy, happy sweet 18th birthday to Lovely Ashley Monique. Cheers! Greetings from your loving BazaLinan family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy third birthday to Francisco D. Diaz who will be celebrating his special day tomorrow, Feb. 14.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

NMA outgoing president Kurt Barnes celebrated his birthday on Thursday, which coincided with the association's annual sports banquet held at the Napu Room of the Pacific Islands Club.

Right, Noni Saipan supporters celebrate after their team beat Saipan Fresh Market in the open division of the PILCOWA caging at the JP Center Basketball Court.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Far right, players of Shirley's Coffee Shop basketball team and its muse with her escort sing the Philippine national anthem during the opening ceremony of the Shirley's caging last week at the JP Center Basketball Court.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

YoungStyle

What's the world's tallest building?

By MARGARET WEBB PRESSLER
(C) 2010, THE WASHINGTON POST

There's a new record holder for world's tallest building—and it's more than half a mile high.

The Burj Khalifa (pronounced ka-LEE-fa) opened last month in Dubai, which is in the United Arab Emirates and already is home to many skyscrapers. But none like this.

The Burj Khalifa (which means Khalifa Tower) is 2,717 feet high, with 160 floors, and took more than five years to build. It is more than a thousand feet taller than the next-tallest building on the planet, in Taiwan. In fact, the last few buildings to take over the title of world's tallest have all been only a little bit taller than the one before — until now.

Burj Khalifa is about twice as tall as the Empire State Building. If you stacked five Washington Monuments on top of one another, the result would be roughly the same height as Burj Khalifa, which you can see from 95 miles away.

In terms of engineering and architecture, building to such heights is not easy. The builders had to make sure that the soil underneath could support such a structure and that the building would be able to withstand the brutal wind and dust storms that can sometimes strike in Dubai. In order to do that, the building had to be able to flex a little bit. Its somewhat jagged exterior is designed to keep the wind from swirling around it in a tornado-like vortex.

So why build such a tall skyscraper? Architecture experts say there's no structural reason to make a building this tall. In fact, the Burj Khalifa gets narrower and narrower as it goes up, so the amount of actual space inside is not much greater than some routine skyscrapers in New York City.

But the attention-getting building is now getting some unwanted attention because no one can go into it. Trips to the observation deck, with its great views, were stopped earlier this week. The building's owner hinted that the huge number of people who wanted to go up in the building may have overwhelmed the elevator system. No word on when it will reopen.

AP

People are shown where to queue for a refund of their money at the ticket counter after the observation deck of the world's tallest tower, Burj Khalifa was unexpectedly shut down in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Feb. 8, 2010.

AP

The world's tallest tower, Buj Khalifa is seen in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Feb. 8, 2010.

How to find fuels that won't run out

By MARGARET WEBB PRESSLER
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Most of the energy we use in this country comes from sources far beneath the Earth's surface called fossil fuels. Petroleum (which is used to make oil and gasoline), natural gas and coal formed deep underground over hundreds of millions of years. These deposits were created as once-living plants and animals decomposed under high pressure and heat.

Humans have created sophisticated ways to get these fuels out of the earth, and they now account for more than 80 percent of all the energy Americans use to heat our homes, cook food and drive our cars.

But someday, these deposits of fossil fuels will run out. So experts want to come up with alternative sources of energy that are "renewable," which means they won't run out. Here are a couple of interesting renewable energy sources that have been growing quickly.

Wind power: Do you remember seeing old grain windmills on a field trip or in storybooks? They used the wind to move giant blades, and as they turned, huge gears inside the windmill operated grain-crushing machinery. Modern windmills, called wind turbines, are used to generate electricity.

Rather than turning grain machinery, the gears attached to a wind turbine's rotors move wires inside a magnetic field, which causes an electric charge to form in the wire. Constant movement of these wires creates an electric current that can be used to power homes and businesses.

Companies are now building huge wind farms, but they can be placed only in areas that are consistently windy. Wind power now accounts for 1.5 percent of all electricity used around the world, and many more wind farms are planned.

Garbage fuel: Most of the trash we throw out ends up in landfills — huge, rotting piles of garbage. As this waste rots over time, it lets off a gas called methane, which is the main ingredient in natural gas. Companies are building plants that capture the methane from garbage dumps and use it to manufacture natural gas.

When chilled to extremely low temperatures, natural gas turns into liquid, which takes up far less space and is easier to move around. In California, the trash collecting company Waste Management has built the largest plant in the world for turning methane from landfills into liquid natural gas. That fuel is then used to power hundreds of the company's garbage trucks.

There's another benefit to this technology: Methane contributes to global warming, so this process keeps it from seeping into the atmosphere from the garbage dump. There are more than 500 landfills in the nation trying to recycle waste into energy. It's expensive to do, but experts say it will become cheaper as more companies do it and the technology improves.

Winter Olympics are a chance to watch overlooked sports

By FRED BOWEN
Special to The Washington Post

Bowen is the author of such kids' books as "Touchdown Trouble" and "Soccer Team Upset."

The Winter Olympics, which start Friday in Vancouver, Canada, are one of my favorite sports events. That's because sports that are usually ignored are in the spotlight.

You should spend some time in the next two weeks watching the Winter Olympics.

To help you enjoy the spectacle, here's a quick viewer's guide to the 2010 Winter Games.

MUST-SEE EVENTS

Alpine skiing: This is the most exciting two minutes in sports. It's so simple. The skiers point their skis down the hill, and the one who gets to the bottom fastest wins. Along the way these skiers will bounce over moguls, skid around corners and fly through the air at speeds faster than 70 miles per hour.

United States vs. Canada women's hockey game: The men's Olympic hockey tournament should be terrific, with five or six teams contending for the gold medal. But if I had to watch one game, it would be the United States-Canada women's game. These teams have faced each other in all 12 World Championship finals. As a rivalry, this is like the Yankees-Red Sox and Duke-North Carolina rolled into one.

Olympics Fact

The first Winter Olympics were held in France in 1924. Before that, figure skating and ice hockey were Summer Olympic events!

(c) 2010, The Washington Post

Real races: One problem with the Winter Olympics is that lots of the races, including skiing, long-track speedskating and bobsled, are against the clock. I like events, such as snowboard cross, cross-country skiing (especially the relays) and short-track speedskating, where the athletes race each other. Those are much more exciting and unpredictable.

This year, the Olympics have added a new event: skicross. Four skiers race down the hill at speeds of up to 65 miles per hour—at the same time. The races promise to have plenty of action, including crashes.

MUST-MISS EVENTS

Bobsledding: I know the sleds go fast and look cool. But every bobsled run looks the same to me. And the gold medalist usually wins by a hundredth of a second after four runs. For me, bobsledding is boring.

That goes double for the luge and skeleton races. As long as we are talking about the luge, I have a question: Why is there a two-man luge event — where one racer lies on top of the other racer—but no two-woman luge race? Shouldn't the women have a chance to look as silly as the men?

Moguls skiing: This freestyle skiing event, where the skiers bounce around the mountain like rag dolls, looks like a good way to break your leg — or another part of your body.

ATHLETES TO WATCH

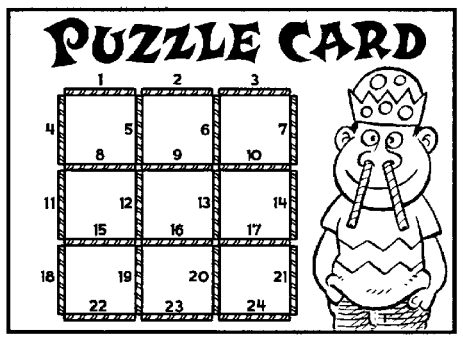
Lindsey Vonn: America's best skier may be the big star of this Olympics—if she competes. Vonn, who has dominated the World Cup ski races leading up to the Games, is the favorite in the downhill and the super-G. But she said Wednesday that an injury to her shin might keep her out of the Games.

Kim Yu-Na: This graceful South Korean figure skater is the heavy favorite to win a gold medal. But watch out: No favorite has won the women's figure skating event since 1994.

Lindsey Jacobellis: This American snowboarder blew her chance for gold four years ago when she decided to show off on the last jump and fell. I bet she'll be more careful this time.

Apolo Anton Ohno: If America's short-track speedskater wins a medal, he will have the most career medals for a U.S. male Winter Olympian, with six. If Ohno wins two, he will break speedskater Bonnie Blair's medal record for any U.S. Winter Olympian.

PUZZLE CARD



FREDDIE FLUNKED STRAWS 101! See if you can remove eight straws from the 24 shown here and have three squares left.

Answer: If you remove straws 3, 5, 7, 8, 17, 18, 20 and 22, you will be left with two large squares and one small square.

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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

CAN YOU SURVIVE THE FOLLOWING FIVE TESTS?

DARE
RARE
RASE
RISE
RISK

Illustrated by David Coulson

You have four minutes to solve these problems and move on to the next challenge. In this type of puzzle, you are given a word that must be changed into another word in a series of moves. During each move, you must change one letter in the previous word so as to form a new word. In our example, we changed DARE to RISK in four moves. See if you can change the following five words in four moves.

1. LOAN to PAID
2. RATE to COST
3. SAND to PILE
4. TAPE to WORM
5. WAND to SILK

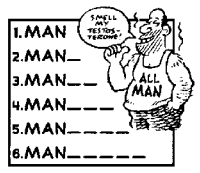
Answers:
1. LOAN, LOIN, LAIN, PAIN, PAID.
2. RATE, RASE, CASE, CAST, COST.
3. SAND, SANE, SALE, PALE, PILE.
4. TAPE, TARE, TORE, WORE, WORM.
5. WAND, SAND, SANK, SINK, SILK.

A REVOLUTIONARY REBUS PUZZLE! What historic American event is represented in the rebus pictured to the right?

Answer: In the rebus, a "T" is being dropped into a "C." Therefore, this must represent the "Boston Tea Party."

DON'T MANGLE THIS ONE! In this puzzle, all of the words get progressively longer, and they all start with MAN. Some hints are:

1. MAN (in place).
2. Found on a lion.
3. Tropical fruit.
4. To control.
5. An aquatic mammal.
6. A musical instrument.



Answers: 1. Man. 2. Mane. 3. Mango. 4. Manage. 5. Manatee. 6. Mandolin.

Don't try this with a cat

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I have a neighbor in my apartment building who I occasionally see carrying his little Pekingese outside, setting her on the sidewalk and holding her by the tail as he encourages her to "go." He's a very nice guy, and other than this unusual method is kind to his dog, but I think this is a very inappropriate way to handle a dog. Is there anything I can do to help this little dog?—Concerned in Framingham, Mass.

DEAR CONCERNED: Communication is the best way to deal with any perceived problem. If he's a nice guy and you have spoken with him before, come down and say hello to him when he's outside with his dog. Ask if you can pet the dog.

You'll want to broach the subject of the tail-holding during the conversation. Ask him if he has a leash for the dog and why he doesn't use it. There may be a reason why—such as the dog not behaving well while on the leash.

If behavior is an issue, ask what kind of leash he's using. Some dogs do better using a harness-type leash, because it fits them more comfortably than a collar type. There's also a lot of advice available to help owners train their dogs to behave on the leash, so perhaps you can get him a book on the subject or, if you own a dog, offer pointers.

Some owners don't put a leash on their dog because they claim not to have the time. If this is the reason, gently remind him that the leash is for the dog's safety and that it may help her "go" more comfortably than the current method.

In any case, keep the conversation light and casual, or at least polite. Striking up a friendship can be rewarding for your neighbor, youself and his dog.

■ ■ ■

Send your pet questions to Sam Mazzotta at ask@pawscorner.com, or write to Paw's Corner, c/o King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475. And find more pet resources at PawsCorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

■ It was François VI, duc de La Rochefoucauld and prince de Marcillac, a noted 17th-century French author and memoirist, who made the following sage observation: "Few are agreeable in conversation, because each thinks more of what he intends to say than of what others are saying, and listens no more when he himself has a chance to speak."

■ Rutherford B. Hayes, the country's 19th president, was the first to install a phone in the White House.

■ It was 1948 when the first vinyl musical recording was made. The piece of music so immortalized was Tchiakovsky's "Nutcracker Suite."

■ Although we tend to think of the bikini as a modern fashion innovation, two-piece bathing suits can be seen in murals in the ancient city of Pompeii.

■ According to Romanian tradition, a sure-fire hangover remedy is tripe soup. In Poland, drinking sour pickle juice is supposed to cure the morning-after agonies. And if you're in Germany, you should try the local remedy: pickled herring.

■ The shortest street on record can be found in the small town of Wick, Scotland. Ebenezer Place is a mere 6 feet, 9 inches long.

■ Do you suffer from pogonophobia? If so, you probably have some issues with Santa. Pogonophobia is a fear of beards.

■ If you're like most Americans, you've stolen from your employer—though probably not much. It seems that 58 percent of your fellow citizens admit to taking office supplies for personal use.

■ The Hundred Years' War actually lasted 116 years.

■ Albert Einstein's final words are lost to history. He spoke his last words in his birth tongue, German, and it seems that the nurse who was attending him during his last moments spoke only English.

■ ■ ■

Thought for the Day: "The most wasted of all days is one without laughter."—E.E. Cummings

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MAGIC MAZE ● ALONE

W S K H E B Y V S P M J H E B
Y I V T Q O L I G D B T Y W T
U N A C C O M P A N I E D R P
M G K I F D D A D M B S Y W M
U L E S U L C E R S Q L O Y M
K E I F D O D E T O S E S A B
Z X W U S N H Q O A O E N R L
J H F D A E C A Y Y L N O T W
V T S R Q L P N L F O O E S K
I H T F E Y R A T I L O S D C
B S Z L A U D I V I D N I I Y

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Hermit	Marooned	Recluse	Stranded
Individual	Myself	Self	Stray
Isolated	No one else	Single	Unaccompanied
Lonely	Only	Solitary	

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

DIFFICULTY: ★★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

	–		x		25
+		x		+	
	÷		+		2
+		–		x	
	x		+		20
23		29		12	

1 2 3 4 5 6 8 8 9

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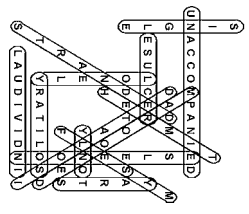
MAGIC MAZE ANSWER



GO FIGURE ANSWER

9	–	4	x	5	25
+		x		+	
8	÷	8	+	1	2
6	x	3	+	2	20
+		–		x	
23		29		12	

Discover winter fun in great outdoors

When the forecast calls for rain, sleet, snow or frigid sub-zero temps like we've experienced lately in Minnesota, don't let old man winter keep you inside. Try something new with your kids that you'll never forget. Like ice fishing!

That's exactly what Meg Bertas, mom of 3-year-old Julian and 5-year-old Sylvie, decided to do a couple of weeks ago. Lured by a "Winter Kite Festival" on a frozen metro lake, they went out in the single-digit temps to be part of the scene. And what a winter wonderland it was! Pint-sized anglers tried their luck ice fishing for perch through a foot of ice drilled out for them by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in the 20-foot-deep waters, scores of others flew spectacular, colorful kites into the sunny skies, while toddlers, who were bundled up from head to toe, grinned from ear to ear on their sleds as their parents pulled them across the bumpy snow.

"Hibernation isn't an option this time of year," said Meg as she patiently untangled her kids' fishing lines that were dangling in a 10-inch-wide hole in the ice. "It's important to remember there's community outside the four walls of our house, and lots to explore even when it's cold outside."

Whether you're in the snowy north or fairer temps in the South, cure the winter blahs by trying something new with your kids. Top off the outing with a simple meal when you get home, and if there is still energy to spare, play a card game or board game by the fireplace in your pjs, and you will have made a special day of it.

Here are some ideas:

■ Getting out the door doesn't have to take a lot of planning. It can be as easy as walking to the neighborhood bakery, visiting the library and checking out a week's supply of reading, or meeting another family for a favorite activity.

■ For something novel, blow bubbles in the freezing air. Watch them bounce and sparkle. Take a night walk with flashlights or cross-country ski with older kids under a full moon for a wild adventure.

■ Check online for free and reasonably priced events at your local park, regional nature center or arboretum. It's important to get kids to experience the changes of seasons in different venues, and wintertime provides fun new discoveries of plant and wildlife.

■ Teach your child something that you enjoyed doing as kid, and rediscover that joy when you are together. Build a snow fort, snowshoe, ice skate, hike, take photos of outdoor scenes and people, or build a campfire and toast marshmallows.

■ ■ ■

Donna Erickson's new award-winning TV series "Donna's Day" airs on public television nationwide. Visit www.donnasday.com to find out when it airs on your local PBS station and to sign up for Donna's e-newsletter. Her latest book is "Donna Erickson's Fabulous Funstuff for Families."

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Life & Style

British fashion designer McQueen found dead at 40

LONDON (AP)—His runway shows were often like performance pieces: One featured models with headwear made of trash. Another showed off 10-inch heels shaped like lobster claws.

At the pinnacle of his success, British fashion designer Alexander McQueen was found dead in his home Thursday, days after posting anguished online remarks about the death of his mother. He was 40.

The circumstances pointed to a possible suicide, but there was no confirmation from police or McQueen's publicists. Authorities said the death was not suspicious, apparently ruling out foul play. They did not indicate how McQueen was discovered.

The Sun tabloid cited an anonymous source on its Web site who said workers found McQueen hanging in his apartment. The newspaper gave no further details. His family issued a statement asking for privacy.

McQueen is credited with helping revive the once-moribund British fashion industry. His edgy pieces were coveted and treasured by stylish women across the globe and seen on numerous red carpets.

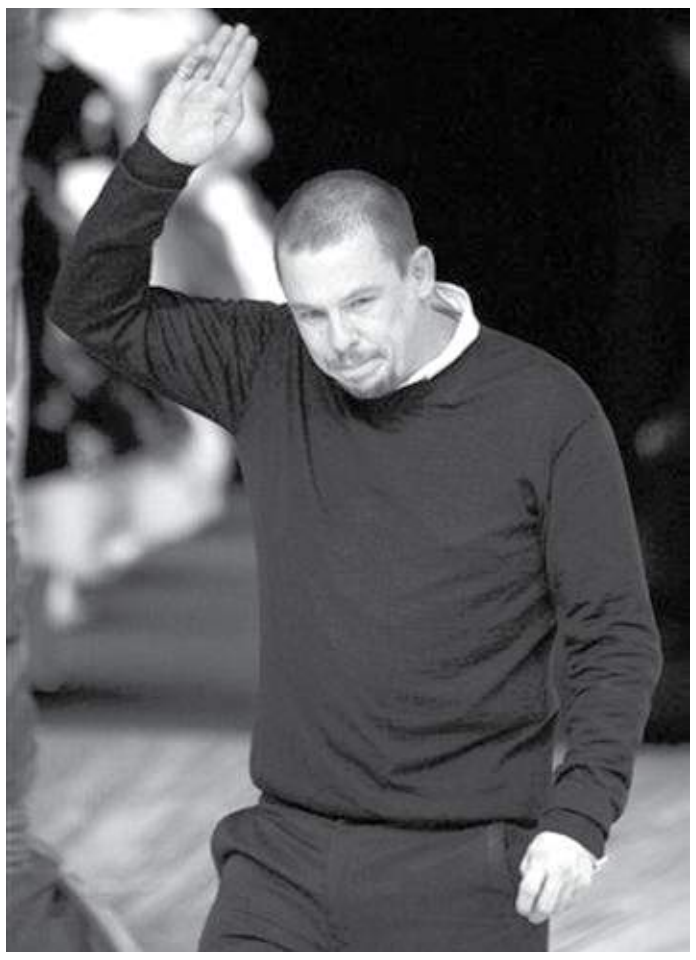
Vogue Editor-in-Chief Anna Wintour called McQueen "one of the greatest talents of his generation."

"He brought a uniquely British sense of daring and aesthetic fearlessness to the global stage of fashion. In such a short career, Alexander McQueen's influence was astonishing—from street style, to music culture and the world's museums," she said in a statement. "His passing marks an insurmountable loss."

McQueen did not design for the celebrities, but they flocked to him for the sheer audacity of his creations, which were instantly recognizable for being dramatic, exquisitely tailored and oh-so sexy.

A stunning dress for Sandra Bullock? A special order for Madonna? Something special for Kate Moss or Naomi Campbell? All these feats seemed easy for the quiet, slim, bearded Englishman who shunned publicity and laughed off the limelight.

Lady Gaga recently made waves when she wore McQueen's spring 2010 lobster-claw shoes in her "Bad Romance" music video.



AP

In this Feb. 29, 2008 file photo, British fashion designer Alexander McQueen acknowledges applause at the end of his fall winter 2008-2009 ready-to-wear collection presented in Paris.

McQueen's mother died Feb. 2. Some fashion experts speculated that his mood may have also been clouded by pressure to top himself again next month at his catwalk show in Paris.

News of his death broke at the start of New York Fashion Week and sent shock waves through the Bryant Park tents. A presentation of McQueen's secondary label, McQ, had been scheduled for later Thursday, but it was quickly canceled.

After word of his death spread, one mourner left pink flowers at the doors of the designer's London headquarters. Mourners also gathered outside his New York store.

"He was a great, great talent who had lost someone important in his life," said Xavier Keane, who placed the flowers. "I know how he feels because I lost my mother last year."

McQueen sounded anguished and frustrated in recent postings on his Twitter page. The remarks also sounded slightly confused.

"i'm letting my followers know the my mother passed away yesterday if it she had not me nor would you RIP mumx," he wrote.

Shortly afterward, he added: "But life must go on!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

On Sunday, he used an obscenity to describe his "awful week" and said he had to "some how pull myself together and finish."

Four days later, he was dead.

"If you are a genius, the pressure to be a genius is always immense," said Imogen Edwards-Jones, author of the "Fashion Babylon," a novel on the untidy underside of the industry.

McQueen helped spark a renaissance in London fashion, helping to revive it after the long-dormant period that followed the punk explosion in the 1970s.

He was also responsible for one of history's most famous "wardrobe malfunctions." He designed Janet Jackson's Super Bowl outfit, which fell open while she was singing, revealing one of her breasts.

In the usually glad-handing fashion world, McQueen was known as a private man who shunned the limelight. He turned down most interview requests and did not cultivate a cult of personality or try do develop an air of mystery about his work.

McQueen, a trim, handsome man with startling gray-blue eyes, had an easy smile, but did not linger in the camera's glare.

"In a world where every man and his dog is a designer, Alexander McQueen was the real deal," said celebrated hat maker Philip Treacy. "His talent was supersonic."

McQueen made his name first in London, then wooed audiences in Paris, New York and Milan to take his place in the upper echelons of the designing world. He was named British Fashion Designer of the Year four times, and was recognized by Queen Elizabeth II in 2003, when she made him a Commander of the British Empire for his fashion leadership.

"McQueen influenced a whole generation of designers. His brilliant imagination knew no bounds as he conjured up collection after collection of extraordinary designs," said Alexandra Shulman, the editor of British Vogue.

Hal Rubenstein, a fashion director for InStyle magazine said McQueen started out tough and angry—in his work and attitude—but softened over time as he felt more appreciated by the industry.

McQueen, he said, was a master of integration of technology into fashion.

"He changed the way so many of us see shows."

McQueen was known for pushing the envelope. At his spring-summer 2010 collection, he featured sculptural cocktail dresses in psychedelic snakeskin prints, with the hoof-like platform booties that were worn by Lady Gaga. The show opened with huge screens projecting close-up images of a woman writhing among a den of snakes.

The death left the future of the McQueen label in doubt.

After a founder's death, other major labels have turned to lesser-known in-house talent, as happened with Valentino; or brought in outside designers, as happened at Emanuel Ungaro; or even recruited family, as with Versace.

McQueen was the youngest of six children born to a taxi driver and a teacher. He received his early fashion training at the Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design, long recognized for its fashion-forward approach and encouragement of Britain's talented young designers.

He learned the finer points of traditional men's tailoring at two famous, conservative Savile Row houses: Anderson and Sheppard, and Gieves and Hawkes.

After his Savile Row stint, McQueen started to develop his trademark, more theatrical designs, working with several other brands before first starting his own label in 1992.

He quickly earned a reputation for innovation. The company he founded was purchased by the Gucci Group, and he retained creative control of his own brand. There were plans for stores in Paris, Milan and London, as well as Manhattan and San Francisco.

His runway shows were always a highlight during the Paris ready-to-wear fashion week. One of his previous collections included a show built around the concept of recycling, with models donning extravagant headwear made out of trash. His last collection, shown in October in Paris, featured elaborate and highly structured cocktail dresses. Critics raved.

Dennis Hopper, wife, agree to stay away order

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Dennis Hopper's wife has agreed to stay 10 feet away from the ailing actor and not contact him directly as they wrangle through their divorce, court records filed Thursday show.

The agreement came after the "Easy Rider" actor requested an emergency restraining order prohibiting contact with his wife of nearly 14 years. His petition claimed his wife, Victoria, has engaged in "outrageous conduct" in the past year and was accompanied by a doctor's declaration that his treatment for prostate cancer required him to eliminate unnecessary stress.

The filing cites several arguments between the couple over child visitation, issues at the compound where the couple and Dennis Hopper's adult children live, and other matters.

A judge approved the agreement after a hearing Thursday morning. It also grants Dennis Hopper, who was recently released from a 10-day hospital stay, daily visits with the couple's 6-year-old daughter.

Victoria Hopper has been living in a unit of the actor's compound in the Venice neighborhood of Los Angeles. The couple's prenuptial agreement calls for her to leave the property within two months of Hopper's divorce filing.

Hopper, 73, filed for divorce Jan. 14 and both sides have cited irreconcilable differences for the breakup. A court hearing on visitation and the protective order is scheduled for March 9.

Thursday's filings were first reported by celebrity Web site TMZ.

AP

In this Oct. 25, 2008 file photo, actor Dennis Hopper, left, and his wife Victoria Duffy arrive to the Breeders' Cup World Championship Day 2 at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, Calif.

Victoria Hopper, 42, claimed in court papers filed last month that the actor smoked marijuana around their daughter, threatened her and that his illness had left him unable to make sound decisions. She also claims the divorce proceedings are an attempt to keep her from receiving an inheritance.

Hopper denied those claims in Thursday's filings. He acknowledged smoking medicinal marijuana, but not near his daughter. He denied threatening Victoria Hopper and said that while he had hoped to avoid a divorce, he recently came to the conclusion he wanted the marriage ended.

A prenuptial agreement calls for Victoria Hopper to receive 25 percent of the actor's estate only if they remain married and living together when he dies. He states he has provided her with life insurance and properly provided for his daughter.

The actor's trust, filed in court Thursday, shows that he has made provisions to divide up his personal property between his children and Victoria Hopper, but only if they are married. He is also establishing a trust to manage, sell or donate paintings, sculptures, photographs and other artwork he has created over his lifetime.

In a declaration, the actor remains hopeful about his prognosis as he undergoes chemotherapy treatments. "My doctors and I are hopeful that this treatment will be successful so that I may soon resume the full enjoyment of my life and work."

That life, Hopper's attorneys and doctors contend, is threatened by the couple's bickering in recent months.

"Whether motivated by malice, greed, dissolution strategy, or emotional instability, (Victoria Hopper's) actions subjected (Dennis Hopper) to emotional distress which has threatened his ability to survive," the actor's attorney, Douglas Bagby, wrote in a court filing.

Richie, Jones honor Jackson in 'We Are the World'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The late Michael Jackson has a prominent role in the revamped version of "We Are the World."

Lionel Richie, who wrote the original charity anthem with Jackson, says the King of Pop can be seen in the new video for the track, singing with his sister Janet.

"We left the original footage of that part, but now he is singing with his sister," Richie said.

"It's something we wanted to see, but his mother requested it too, for Janet to sing with Michael," said Quincy Jones, who produced the original track and helped orchestrate the re-re-cording. "It was perfect. It was meant to be."

The video is set to make its debut Friday during coverage of the opening ceremony for the Winter Olympics. "We Are the World—25 for Haiti" features 80 artists, including Pink, Barbra Streisand, Celine Dion, Kanye West and Jennifer Hudson.

Proceeds from sales of the song will benefit earthquake recovery efforts in Haiti.

AP

This 1985 black and white file photo shows Lionel Richie, clockwise from left, Daryl Hall, Quincy Jones, Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder record "We Are The World" by USA for Africa. Richie, who wrote the original charity anthem with the late Michael Jackson, says the King of Pop can be seen in the new video for the track, singing with his sister Janet.

AP

In this Oct. 26, 2009 file photo, personal trainer Jillian Michaels speaks at the Women's Conference 2009 Night at the Village at The Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, Calif.

Jillian Michaels: Suit over diet product baseless

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Celebrity trainer Jillian Michaels fired back Thursday at a false advertising lawsuit filed against her over a diet supplement, calling the claim baseless and saying she still supports the product.

"My reputation and credibility are of the utmost importance to me," Michaels said in a statement to The Associated Press. "This baseless lawsuit is entirely without merit and is being handled by my legal team."

Christie Christensen of Lake Elsinore, Calif., sued Michaels on Tuesday and is seeking class-action status for the claim. Michaels is a hard-charging, no-nonsense trainer best-known as one of the stars of NBC's hit reality show, "The Biggest Loser."

Christensen's lawsuit claims she bought a product called "Jillian Michaels Maximum Strength Calorie Control" last month and that it has failed to lessen her appetite or cause her to lose weight as advertised.

Dr. Dre sues over unpaid 'Chronic' royalties

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Dr. Dre sued the new iteration of Death Row Records on Thursday claiming the label failed to pay royalties and released a new version of his iconic album "The Chronic" without his permission.

Dre, whose real name is Andre Young, filed the suit in federal court in Los Angeles against WIDEawake Death Row Records and its parent companies.

Young has not been paid royalties on the original "The Chronic" album since he split with Death Row in 1996, the lawsuit states. The label, a one-time powerhouse of rap music artists, eventually fell into bankruptcy but was bought by WIDEawake and re-formed.

Young's lawsuit claims his attorneys notified the new owners that he was owed royalties, but they have never paid him. He also claims the label issued "The Chronic Re-Lit" and a greatest hits collection without his permission or the proper rights.

WIDEawake Death Row Records has also sold digital copies of "The Chronic" without having the proper rights, the lawsuit states. Young's original contract with Death Row didn't include digital distribution rights, according to the suit.

"When it came to paying artist royalties and honoring limits on Dr. Dre recordings that could be released, the "new" Death Row Records, to quote our client, 'forgot about Dre,'" Young's attorney Howard King said in a statement. "This lawsuit will make sure they remember."

AP

In this Sept. 30, 2009 file photo, Dr. Dre poses for pictures at a news conference announcing, Heartbeats by Lady Gaga, the latest addition to the Beats by Dr. Dre family of headphones from Monster Cable, in New York.

Kiper is first 'Survivor' hero sent home

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jessica "Sugar" Kiper was too sweet for "Survivor: Heroes vs. Villains."

The emotional 29-year-old pinup model originally from Baton Rouge, La., was the first castaway voted off the CBS reality show's 20th season, which pits tribes of admirable and nasty veteran players against each other. Kiper's friendly nighttime banter annoyed her fellow "heroes," who quickly targeted her after they failed the first immunity challenge.

"Nobody really had a good night's sleep because of her," hunky Colby Donaldson complained.

Kiper, who previously competed on "Survivor: Gabon," seemed to be giving it her all. During the first reward challenge, which required the tribes to physically battle over bags buried in the sand, Kiper let another player rip off her bikini top, so she could scurry across the finish line. During the immunity challenge, however, Kiper totally blundered a puzzle.

"I was disappointed in myself," she later said, sobbing on the beach.

AP

In this publicity image released by CBS, the new cast of the CBS reality series, "Survivor: Heroes vs. Villans," standing from left, Benjamin "Coach" Wade, Courtney Yates, Amanda Kimmel, Rob Mariano, Cirie Fields, Rupert Boneham, Stephenie LaGrossa, Colby Donaldson, Tyson Apostol, Jessica "Sugar" Kiper, James "J.T" Thomas Jr., Danielle DiLorenzo, Sandra Diaz, kneeling from left, James Clement, Parvati Shallow, Russell Hantz, Candice Woodcock, Tom Westman, Jerri Manthey and Randy Bailey are shown.

Couple is moving at different speeds toward the next step

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I have been seeing "Hillary" for a little more than a year. We're both in our late 20s and just starting our careers. We both live with our parents.

We've been having problems because I'm not willing to move in with her. I have told Hillary many times that there is no audition for marriage, but she's convinced it would "bring us closer." Many of the people I've worked with ended up splitting shortly after moving in together. Conversely, many of Hillary's friends moved in with significant others and were married shortly after.

I admit, I'd like to take things slow (call me old-fashioned), but Hillary doesn't know if she can wait until I feel ready to take this step or propose.

We acknowledge that we love each other. Our parents are not exactly rooting for us, so we're taking another break from things. I suggested that we both find our own places for the time being. Hillary has never lived by herself. We don't know what to do, and I'd like some advice from someone who doesn't have a stake in this.

AT A CROSSROADS IN ILLINOIS

DEAR AT A CROSSROADS: I'm glad you asked. Neither you nor Hillary seem ready for the kind of commitment she's angling for right now. What's clear to me is that she wants to get out of her parents' house, while you appear to want some independence before making a lifetime commitment. Your suggestion about getting separate apartments is a good one.

I would love to know why neither set of parents is "rooting" for this match. But let it serve to make you think long and hard before doing anything you're not 100 percent ready for.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I are having a disagreement. I went into a wo men's clothing store to buy her a formal dress for Christmas. She has recently gotten into superb shape, and I wanted to celebrate it by buying her something formal but sexy.

I found an item I liked but was unsure how or whether it would fit her. The store manager who was helping me asked one of the salesclerks to try it on for me. She did, and I bought the dress.

My wife feels this was highly inappropriate of everyone involved—tantamount to a "come on." Can you give me your views?

WELL-INTENDED IN PHOENIX

DEAR WELL-INTENDED: The store manager's offer to have an employee put on the dress to show you was something that's done all the time. Your wife may be in "superb shape" physically, but emotionally she appears to be insecure. Now that you know this about her, the next time you want to buy her an item of clothing, take her with you. It won't fix what ails her, but you'll avoid another disagreement.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: Someone said something to me today that really offended me. I let her know she had hurt my feelings and her response was, "I'm sorry you took what I said the wrong way." (Abby, there was no other way to interpret it!) Essentially, she made it MY fault because I was "too sensitive."

If I said something that hurt someone's feelings, I would simply say, "I apologize. I didn't mean to hurt you." When you try to justify your actions and blame the other person for taking offense there really is no apology forthcoming—which only makes the situation worse.

Was there a witty comeback to let this person know her lack of an apology did not go unnoticed?

OFFENDED IN ALBUQUERQUE

DEAR OFFENDED: I wouldn't call it "witty," but it's accurate: "That's right—blame the victim!"

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

THE INSIDE OF MY HEAD WAS EXPLODING WITH FIREWORKS. FORTUNATELY, MY LAST THOUGHT TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS WHEN IT LEFT.
WHEN I CAME TO, THE PIECES ALL FIT TOGETHER. JACK AND JOE'S LIVES WERE DEFINED BY INTEGERS. OBVIOUSLY, THEY WERE PART OF A "NUMBERS" RACKET!
BACK IN THE OFFICE, I PULLED THE FILES ON ALL THE NUMBERS BIG ENOUGH TO KEEP SUSIE QUIET AND WANT ME OUT OF THE PICTURE. THE ANSWER HIT ME LIKE A .44 SLUG. IT HAD TO BE THE NUMBER THEY CALLED "MR. BILLION."
Answer: 1,000,000,000
TIME'S UP. BRING YOUR PAPERS FORWARD.
CASE CLOSED!
WHAT DID YOU GET, CALVIN? I THINK THE ANSWER'S 15.
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2-13

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

LIZ THINKS I HAVE NO FASHION SENSE
WELL, I'LL SHOW HER!
WHERE'S MY PAISLEY ASCOT?
I'D BETTER CLOSE THE DRAPES
www.garfield.com
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Distributed by Universal Uclick
JIM DAVIS 2-13

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

OKAY. THOSE NEW TABLETS ARE TOO COOL.
THE FUNCTIONALITY OF A LAPTOP WITH ALL KINDS OF MULTIMEDIA CAPABILITIES.
LET'S GO TRY TO CONVINCE LAURA WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THIS.
SIGH. I REMEMBER WHEN HE USED TO TALK ABOUT ME LIKE THAT.
www.gocomics.com
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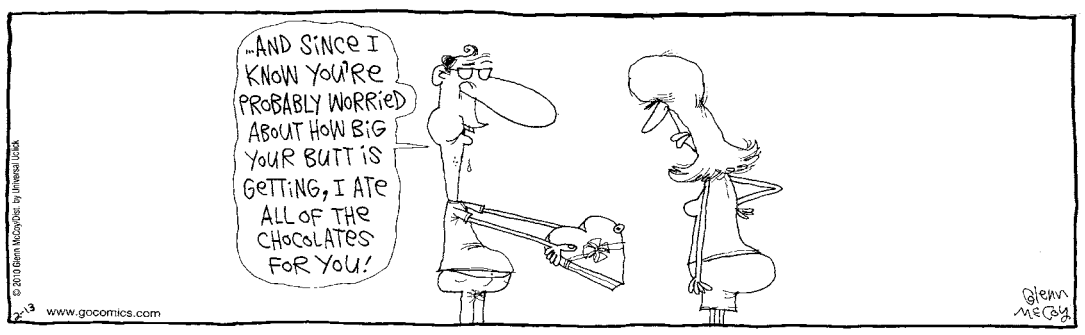
2-13

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


...AND SINCE I KNOW YOU'RE PROBABLY WORRIED ABOUT HOW BIG YOUR BUTT IS GETTING, I ATE ALL OF THE CHOCOLATES FOR YOU!
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2-13 www.gocomics.com
Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Pt. of speech
5 Rudimentary teachings
9 Insulation ingredient (Abbr.)
12 Sandwich cookie
13 Aching
14 Ah's mate
15 Spiked club
16 Elbow counterpart
17 Bake-sale org.
18 BPOE members
19 Doctor's due
20 Scoff
21 Altar affirmative
23 Expert
25 Panacea
28 Boil
32 Rainout spreads
33 Clean the cookware
34 Anti-aircraft fire
36 Allay
37 Opposed
38 Hooter
39 Half a fortnight
42 Below par
44 Weak, as an excuse
48 Eggs
49 Chills and fever
50 Pre-diploma hurdle
51 Fleur-de- —
52 Counterfeit
53 More than unhappy
54 Aviate
55 Dazzle
56 Elusive

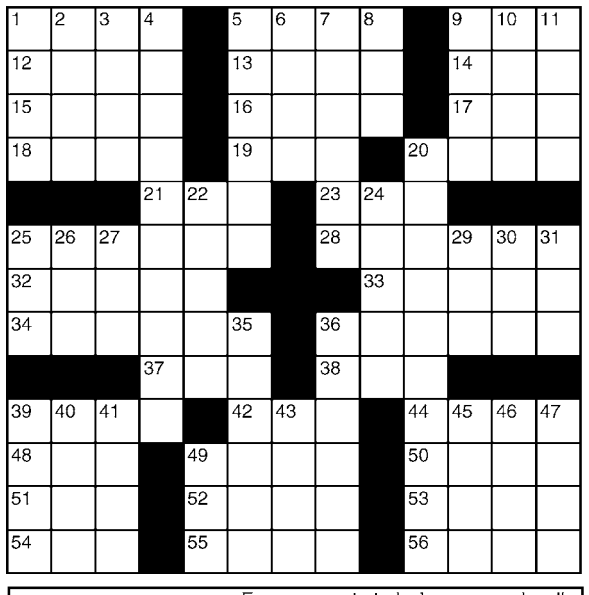
DOWN

1 Arrive
2 Type of 50-Across
3 Bottle feature
4 Typical blue-collar guy
5 Request
6 Skeleton component
7 Heebie-jeebies
8 Witness
9 Benedict XVI, e.g.
10 Election Day verb
11 Blacken
20 Raccoon coat wearer?
22 "Saturday Night Fever" venue
24 Plant again
25 Greek H
26 Fond du —
27 Annoy
29 Youngster
30 "Whadja say?"
31 Prior to
35 Chess piece
36 Hardly funny
39 CNN's Blitzer
40 Satan's specialty
41 Simple
43 Waikiki wingding
45 Wheelbase terminus
46 Man-handle
47 TV trophy
49 Fool

Solution time: 27 mins.

A	T	E		S	O	P	H		B	R	A	D
L	E	I		I	O	T	A		E	U	R	O
P	E	T	E	R	P	A	N		A	N	E	W
			H	I	E	S			O	R	G	A	N
S	T	E	R	N		F	A	D	E			
W	O	R	E		P	A	N	O	R	A	M	A
A	G	O		R	O	T	O	R		R	E	F
M	A	R	Z	I	P	A	N		C	B	E	R
			A	B	E	L		P	H	O	T	O
W	O	O	F	S			S	E	A	R		
E	R	S	T		P	A	N	A	T	E	L	A
B	A	L	I		I	G	O	R		A	I	R
B	L	O	G		P	E	W	S		L	E	T

Yesterday's answer 2-13



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Kelly Hu, 42; Peter Gabriel, 60; Stockard Channing, 66; George Segal, 76

Happy Birthday: You have the insight, fortitude and knowledge to get you where you want to go. You are hardworking, intelligent and a good trouble-shooter. You can easily convince others to get involved in your goals. State your position and stick to it regardless of what others do or say. Your numbers are 4, 6, 15, 26, 28, 32, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Taking part in organizations or groups that you relate to will help you discover skills you didn't realize you have. A good working relationship will develop with someone you become acquainted with while helping others. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Don't let anyone take advantage of you because you haven't found out the facts about a situation you face. Don't let uncertainty be your downfall. Love is in the stars. ✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You are likely to get caught in the middle if you meddle in other people's affairs. Stick to your own responsibilities and refrain from mixing business with pleasure. You should be looking out for your own interests, not someone else's. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Being active and participating in activities that interest you will result in making new friends. An investment or property deal appears to be a good move for you. There is money to be made and a bright future ahead of you. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Don't let your emotions lead to financial loss. You have to keep your wits about you, even if someone is confusing you or uncertainties are making a decision more difficult. Don't dodge your problems. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Follow an unorthodox means when it comes to your health and your financial future. You can clear matters up quickly if you act responsibly and say what's on your mind. Let your intuition help you make the changes required. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Socializing will invite all sorts of ideas and plans that will complement what you are trying to do. Shopping or doing something that will improve your looks should be on your agenda. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): You need to make changes in your life that will encourage your creative project to flourish. Don't let the past hold you back when it's the future you should be concerned with. Love is in a high cycle and someone who cares for you can lead you in the right direction. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): You will face many choices. Uncertainty will be the enemy. Don't let someone else make your decisions for you. Act on your own behalf and you will make professional gains and more money. Love problems will develop if you haven't been completely honest. ✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Unexpected events will bring you in contact with someone from your past. Open up

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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doors that have been closed and you will discover something you may not have noticed in the past. A commitment can be made that will allow you a brighter future. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Get busy working toward something important and you will develop a friendship that will inspire and encourage you. There is much to learn and to incorporate into your life. You can secure your financial position. You have more to offer than you realize. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): The more involved you become in an organization, the more it will help your personal plans. A partnership will offer you security and ongoing benefits. Opportunities for love and romance are present and should be taken advantage of. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are curious and have your own way of doing things. You are sensitive, caring and intuitive. You have good ideas and the will to succeed.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		8	4	2	3	6		
				6				
7								1
	8			4			2	
2			1		9			3
	1			5			4	
4								7
				1				
		3	9	7	2	5		

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/13

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

9	4	2	8	7	3	1	5	6
7	5	8	1	9	6	3	4	2
1	3	6	2	4	5	9	8	7
6	9	3	4	1	8	7	2	5
5	7	4	6	3	2	8	9	1
2	8	1	7	5	9	6	3	4
3	6	9	5	2	7	4	1	8
4	2	7	9	8	1	5	6	3
8	1	5	3	6	4	2	7	9

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/12

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

FASHION WEEK: VOGUE-CAB-U-LARY **Solution: 12 letters**

P	F	A	S	N	T	G	D	E	X	T	E	R	S	S
A	R	K	S	B	L	O	G	E	U	S	E	L	T	O
D	I	E	E	T	A	L	L	I	K	G	O	O	R	C
E	N	N	N	E	E	C	A	R	Y	T	O	Ⓢ	I	H
E	G	O	Z	C	W	X	R	F	A	B	Ⓣ	R	K	I
N	E	J	I	N	M	E	T	T	M	Ⓔ	O	C	S	F
A	T	U	B	A	C	O	O	U	Ⓢ	N	W	H	L	F
S	T	A	I	R	E	P	D	U	R	L	L	E	W	O
T	E	K	E	F	T	E	E	E	A	E	A	E	O	N
Y	S	M	F	E	L	R	S	C	S	T	I	K	O	O
D	O	U	E	D	T	E	I	C	H	S	R	Y	K	S
N	R	W	E	R	Q	T	I	E	R	M	E	D	I	A
E	S	E	A	U	P	N	R	O	N	I	T	O	E	E
R	W	H	I	O	U	N	O	I	H	S	A	F	H	S
T	C	N	E	T	T	E	R	O	J	A	M	H	S	S

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Bizness, Blogeuse, Boots, Chartreuse, Cheeky, Chiffon, Clog, Dee Nasty, Dexter, Fall, Fashion, Fringe, Hair, Kenojuak, Killa, Leather, Majorette, Material, Media, Mercer, Mode, Oni, Optical, Rogue, Rosette, Ruff, Season, Sequin, Sets, Shoes, Skirts, Sweet Potato, Texture, Tour De France, Trendy, Tunics, Tweedledumb, Wear, Week, Wookie, Yam

Yesterday's Answer: Blow

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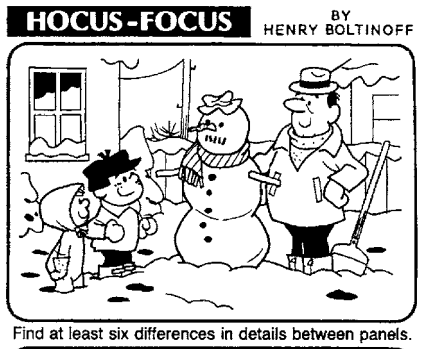
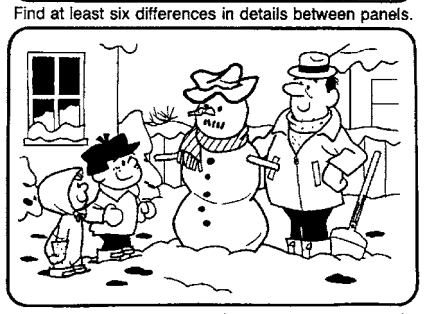
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Snowman's hat is bigger. 2. Man's coat has a zipper. 3. Toddler is wearing boots. 4. Utility pole is missing. 5. Window curtain is longer. 6. Shovel handle is shorter.

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Wishing Well®

5	2	4	3	2	5	6	8	2	3	8	6	4
B	W	L	B	I	E	M	F	D	E	O	A	O
7	8	3	6	3	7	5	8	5	8	5	4	7
H	R	D	K	E	A	A	G	U	I	T	V	R
4	8	7	8	7	6	4	2	4	7	8	4	8
E	V	D	E	S	E	O	E	V	T	E	E	N
3	7	3	4	8	6	8	2	4	3	5	6	3
C	U	I	R	E	A	M	N	F	S	Y	M	I
2	7	4	2	4	2	4	5	8	2	4	2	3
T	D	L	H	O	O	W	E	I	U	I	G	V
7	8	4	3	5	2	8	7	4	2	6	2	7
Y	E	N	E	N	H	S	P	G	T	E	S	A
5	7	5	7	6	5	7	6	7	5	7	6	5
D	Y	U	S	N	R	O	D	F	E	F	S	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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Super Crossword

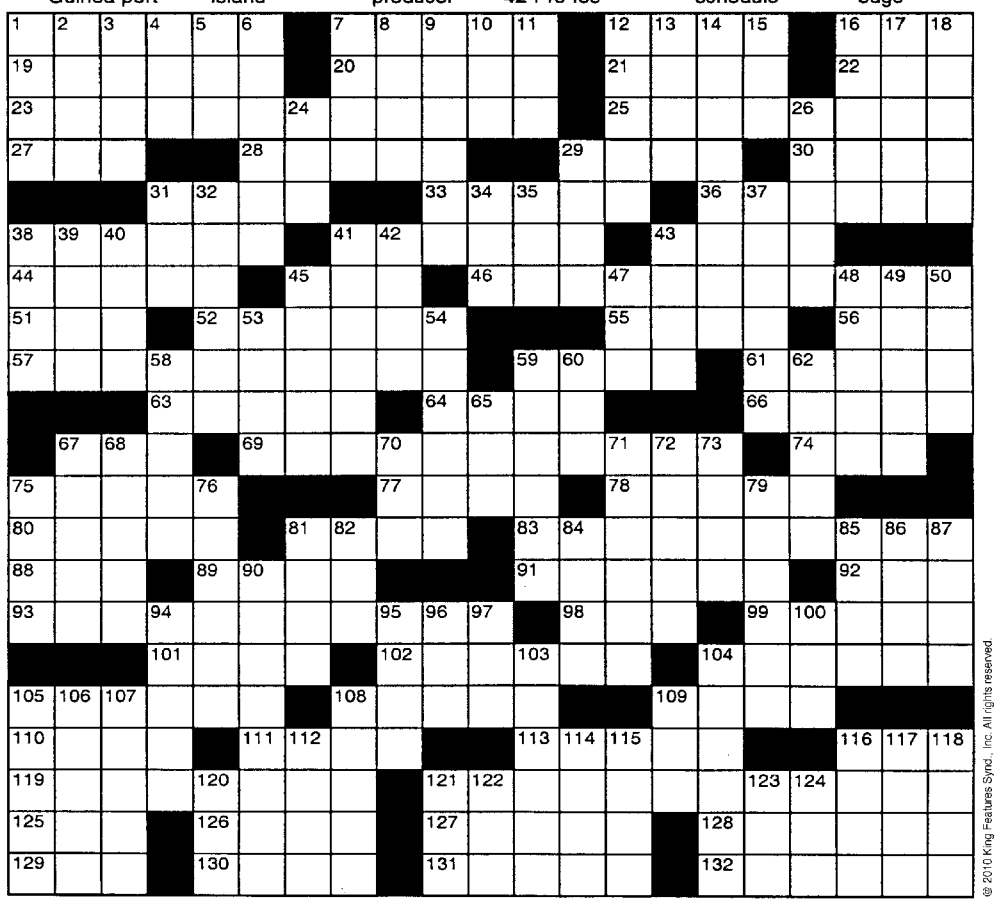
CAN'T STANDISH STILL

ACROSS

1 WWII site
7 Serenity
12 Brazos River city
16 Clerical garb
19 Point the finger at
20 Synthetic fiber
21 Christiania, today
22 Remote
23 Riddle: Part 1
25 Gershwin's "— in Blue"
27 Beatty or Buntline
28 Gaggle gal
29 Watch part
30 Fountain order
31 Rocker Marc
33 Nature spirit
36 Sable, for one
38 Lee of "The Fall Guy"
41 Canta-loupe's cousin
43 Team
44 Skater Berezhnaya
45 Bleak critique
46 Riddle: Part 2
51 Papua New Guinea port
52 Contam-inates
55 Butz or Warren
56 Sapporo sash
57 Tactful
59 Consider
61 Ford flop
63 Maine town
64 Space
66 Al — (cooking term)
67 Lear, to Goneril
69 Riddle: Part 3
74 Fleur-de- —
75 Desert schlepper
77 — Romeo
78 Heep of Dickens
80 Coeur d'—, ID
81 Cartoonist Silverstein
83 Hard to describe
88 Hurried
89 Little one
91 Prate
92 —4 (Toyota model)
93 Riddle: Part 4
98 Loafer part
99 Gladden
101 Alan of "Gilligan's Island"
102 Frequent Funicello co-star
104 Scanty
105 Roller-coaster feeling
108 1970 World's Fair site
109 Chatterley or Windermere
110 Director Nicolas
111 Skip
113 Turbine part
116 — Goncalo, Brazil
119 Avoidance
121 Answer to riddle
125 Swell place?
126 Actor Barry
127 Murcia mister
128 Farm adolescent
129 Weaken
130 — -Neisse Line
131 Early German
132 Spanish —

DOWN

1 Cut
2 Flu symptom
3 Like some donuts
4 Groan producer
5 Shake-spearean snake
6 Equine exclama-tions
7 Kelly's possum
8 Goofs
9 Tabloid subjects
10 Dot follower
11 Minnesota twins?
12 Merit
13 '75 Wimbledon winner
14 More humid
15 "Alley —"
16 In progress
17 Soup scoop
18 Adams or Ferry
24 Actor Chaney
26 It needs to be threaded
29 Boom or gaff
31 Swindle
32 Wind instrument?
34 Spitz sound
35 Exec's deg.
37 Perplexed
38 Blend
39 Jai —
40 Army vehicle
41 "Makin' Whoopee" singer
42 Pro foe
43 "The King and I" setting
45 Brendel's instrument
47 Pigskin prop
48 Mubarak of Egypt
49 Helps a hood
50 Mosaic bit
53 Singer Tori
54 Torah, e.g.
58 Shade of green
59 Realm
60 Big bird
62 Indian city
65 Oven setting
67 — Lama
68 Improve
70 — kwon do
71 London borough
72 Furious
73 Short movie?
75 Funny fellow
76 Deadly
79 "It's a deal!"
81 — terrier
82 Drill sergeant's shout
84 West. alliance
85 Improve oneself, in a way
86 Behind schedule
87 Always
90 Aged, as paper
94 Poultry serving
95 Cobbler's need
96 Palindromic name
97 Asian ox
100 Nonclerical
103 It's down in the mouth
104 Vandellas' leader
105 Lock
106 Biblical book
107 Summarize
108 Ocean vessel
109 Christie or Costello
112 Lion's pride
114 Melville work
115 Like Hitchcock's curtain
116 Couch
117 Served well
118 Creole veggie
120 — trip
121 Ltr. addenda
122 Where flocks frolic
123 "Tell — No" ('65 hit)
124 Outer edge



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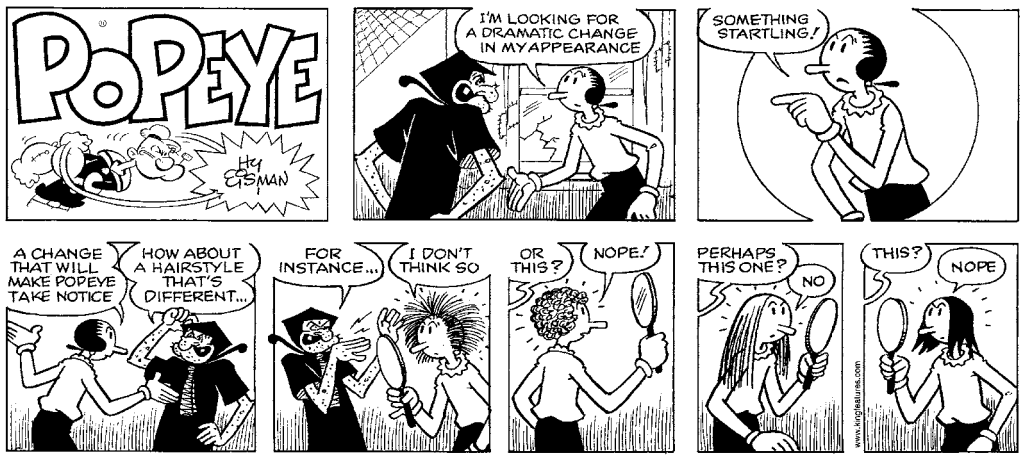
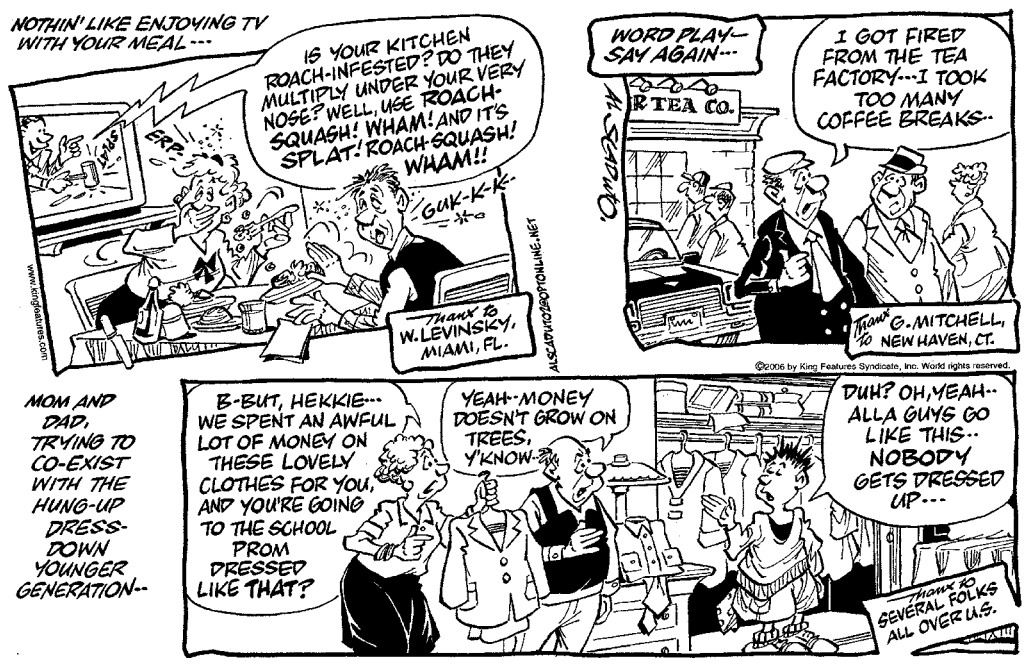


They'll Do It Every Time — by Al Scaduto


NOTHIN' LIKE ENJOYING TV WITH YOUR MEAL---
IS YOUR KITCHEN ROACH-INFESTED? DO THEY MULTIPLY UNDER YOUR VERY NOSE? WELL, USE ROACH-SQUASH! WHAM! AND IT'S SPLAT! ROACH-SQUASH! WHAM!!
ERP
GUK-K-K-
—Thanx to W.LEVINSKY, MIAMI, FL.
WORD PLAY—SAY AGAIN---
I GOT FIRED FROM THE TEA FACTORY---I TOOK TOO MANY COFFEE BREAKS..
R TEA CO.
—Thanx C.MITCHELL, TO NEW HAVEN, CT.
MOM AND DAD, TRYING TO CO-EXIST WITH THE HUNG-UP DRESS-DOWN YOUNGER GENERATION--
B-BUT, HEKKIE--- WE SPENT AN AWFUL LOT OF MONEY ON THESE LOVELY CLOTHES FOR YOU, AND YOU'RE GOING TO THE SCHOOL PROM DRESSED LIKE THAT?
YEAH--MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON TREES, Y'KNOW-
DUH? OH, YEAH-- ALLA GUYS GO LIKE THIS-- NOBODY GETS DRESSED UP---
—Thanx TO SEVERAL FOLKS ALL OVER U.S.
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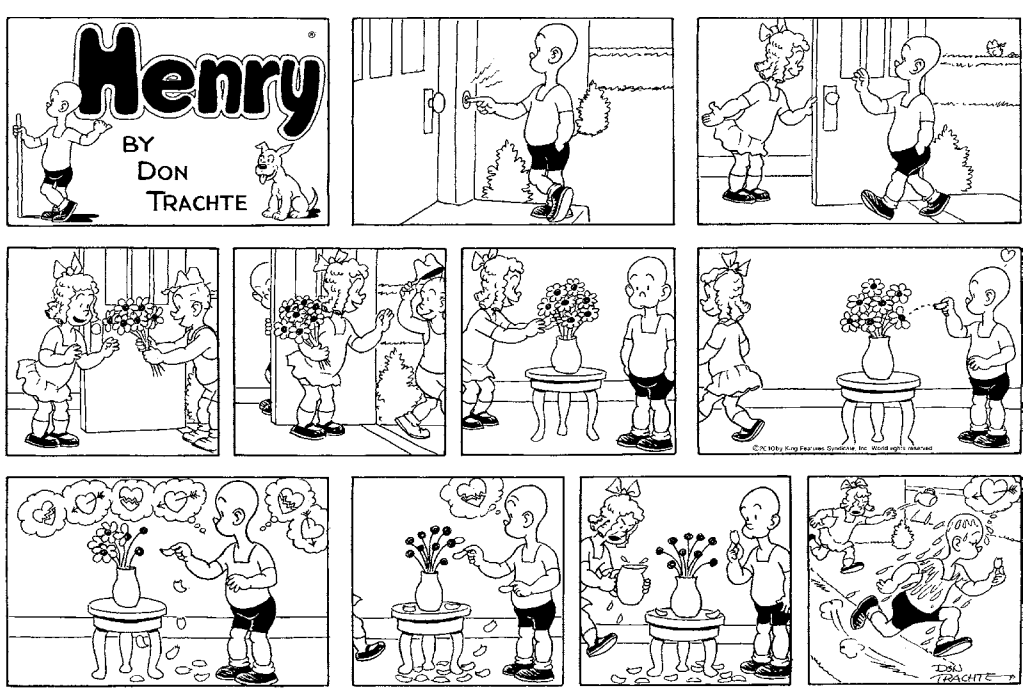


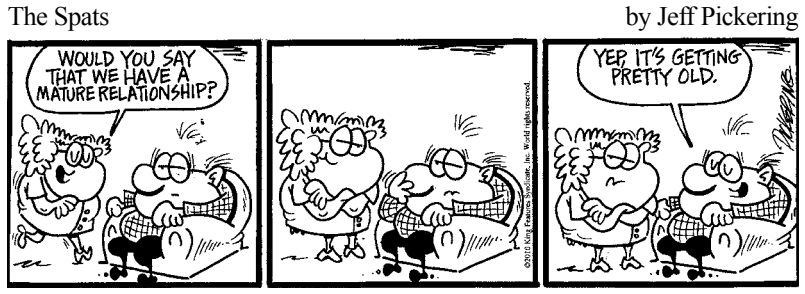
Trivia test by Fifi Rodriguez

1. LANGUAGE: What country once was known by the Latin name of Caledonia?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Guadalcanal is part of which island group in the Pacific Ocean?
3. MOVIES: Which actors voiced the two main characters, Woody and Buzz, on the "Toy Stories" movies?
4. INVENTIONS: Who is credited with inventing the Hula Hoop?
5. TELEVISION: Who played the character Latka Gravas on "Taxi"?
6. MYTHOLOGY: What was domain of the Greek god Aeolus?
7. HISTORY: In what war were tanks first used?
8. U.S. STATES: What is the only letter of the alphabet that does not appear in the name of any U.S. state?
9. MEASUREMENTS: The term "vicennial" refers to a period of how many years?
10. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is the symbol for the zodiac sign Capricorn?

Amber Waves — by Dave T. Phipps

FROM THAT POINT ON NO ONE IN THE VILLAGE EVER TEASED THE BOY.
FOR HE HAD SHOWN HE WAS BRAVE AND WORTHY OF.....
ZZZZZ
GRANDPA, THE GAME IS YOU TRY TO STAY AWAKE UNTIL I FALL ASLEEP.

The Spats — by Jeff Pickering


WOULD YOU SAY THAT WE HAVE A MATURE RELATIONSHIP?
YEP, IT'S GETTING PRETTY OLD.
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Answers

1. Scotland
2. Solomon Islands
3. Tom Hanks and Tim Allen
4. Richard Knerr and Arthur "Spud" Melin
5. Andy Kaufman
6. God of the winds
7. World War I
8. The letter "Q"
9. 20 years
10. The goat

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Saturday's Answers

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CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

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Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 6-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $27 for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of the packages below.

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• 5-Liner	**$24**	**$39**
• 3-Liner with picture	**$24**	**$42**
• 5-Liner with picture	**$36**	**$57**

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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$100 Security Deposit Required
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2001 Toyota Sienna Van (white) good condition with 164,000 miles, automatic transmission, air condition, CD player, power windows and look. **$5,500 OBO**. **Please call 287-4614**

www.saipantribune.com

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Lower N.H. barracks and property for long term lease. As Lito house and property for long term lease. If interested please call at 287-7676 for more information.

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Fina Sisu Apt., 2-BR, 1-BTH, FF, AC, BU Genset/ 24-hr water, security, laundry room, free Wi-Fi & ample parking. Right behind NMC campus. MIHA applicants accepted. Special rates for NMC faculty/ students. Call 235-6527/8 or 285-1317 for info.

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pennyyy
£oolish

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Find today's solution in this section

Saipan Tribune
Sports
Angamwas rules 4-person
Tribune
FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 2009
Fitial eyes Cepeda's re-appointment to NMC board.
DPH to ask for extension of emergency declaration.
$1.35M earmarks for NMI now up for Obama's
By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
Fitial: Ombudsman shouldn't accommodate 'overstayers'
10 DAYS to go before Christmas
OPINION METER
This week's poll:
Should NMC revisit its policy of allowing the termination of NMC employees without cause?
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Immigration FORUM

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Cavs beat Magic for 13th straight victory

CLEVELAND (AP)—LeBron James had 32 points and 13 assists as the Cleveland Cavaliers matched their franchise record by winning their 13th straight game with a 115-106 victory over the Orlando Magic on Thursday night in a rematch of last season's Eastern Conference finals.

Both teams are again on top of the East this year, but Cleveland has won both head-to-head meetings.

As he has done all season, James again closed out another opponent late in the game, scoring seven points in the final three minutes. Orlando went scoreless for five minutes in the fourth as Cleveland turned a two-point deficit into a 105-98 lead.

The anticipated matchup between Shaquille O'Neal and Dwight Howard never really materialized because both were in foul trouble throughout. Fouls were a problem for both teams as they combined for 43 fouls and 56 free throws.

With O'Neal on the bench most of the night, the Cavaliers again relied on James. And as usual, he delivered.

James hit a deep jumper from just inside the 3-point line to give the Cavaliers a 105-96 lead, then followed it up with a 3-pointer and another jumper to put the game out of reach. James also had eight rebounds, falling two shy of his third triple-double this season.

Orlando, playing for the fourth time in five nights, had won nine of its last 11.

J.J. Hickson had 20 points, Anderson Varejao had 16 off the bench and O'Neal had 10 points and six rebounds in just 19 minutes.

Howard, who also struggled with fouls in the first meeting against Cleveland this season, had 19 points and 11 rebounds for Orlando. Rashard Lewis added 19 points, Vince Carter had 14 and Jameer Nelson had 13.

Cleveland can set a record for consecutive wins next week when it hosts Denver on Thursday following the All-Star break.

AP

Cleveland Cavaliers' Shaquille O'Neal dunks the ball in the fourth quarter in an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic, Thursday, Feb. 11, 2010, in Cleveland.

Spurs 111, Denver 92

At Denver, George Hill scored 17 points after starting in place of an injured Tony Parker and the San Antonio Spurs never trailed in routing the cold-shooting Denver Nuggets 111-92 on Thursday night.

DeJuan Blair also scored 17 points, Tim Duncan added 16 and Manu Ginobili 15 for San Antonio, which snapped a three-game losing streak to Denver dating to last season.

The Spurs outshot the Nuggets 53.2 percent to 39.2 in winning for just the third time in six games despite missing Parker, who was sidelined with a left hip flexor strain suffered three days ago during a loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Nuggets were missing their best defensive player, Kenyon Martin, who sat out a second consecutive game because of tendinitis in his left knee.

Nene had 20 points and Carmelo Anthony 19 for the Nuggets, who lost for only the fourth time in 28 games this season at the Pepsi Center.

Down by nine at the half, the Nuggets narrowed the deficit to 56-52 on a fastbreak layup by Nene before San Antonio pulled away again.

The Spurs used a 7-0 burst capped by Roger Mason's 3-pointer to go in front 72-58 with 4:27 left in the third, and took an 83-70 advantage into the fourth quarter.

They continued pulling away from there, scoring 12 of the first 16 points in the final period to extend their lead to 95-74, their biggest to that point.

Going on an 8-0 run to start the second quarter, the Spurs built a 40-29 advantage. Blair fueled the spree with three straight baskets, including a dunk that came after Malik Allen turned the ball over in San Antonio's end of the court. Hill's fastbreak layup with 6:49 left in the second extended San Antonio's lead to 14 points but Denver cut the deficit to 54-45 at halftime as Anthony made successive baskets in the last 52 seconds of the period.

San Antonio set a blistering shooting pace in the first quarter, hitting 72.2 percent of its shots (13 of 18), including all four from 3-point range, to take a 32-29 lead.

NBA BRIEFS

Kobe, Al out of All-Star game with injuries

DALLAS (AP)—Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers and Allen Iverson of the Philadelphia 76ers won't play in the All-Star game this weekend. Both former NBA MVPs were voted into the starting lineups by fans. The NBA announced Thursday that Bryant will be replaced by Dallas point guard Jason Kidd on the Western Conference roster. Iverson's spot in the Eastern Conference will be filled by New York forward David Lee. Bryant missed his third straight game for the Lakers Wednesday night with a sore left ankle. Iverson missed his fifth straight game for the 76ers Wednesday night to be with his sick daughter. Kidd will be making his 10th All-Star appearance, while Lee is a first-time All-Star. The coaches will determine which players will replace Bryant and Iverson in the starting lineup. The game is Sunday at Dallas Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Hip injury sidelines Spurs' Parker

DENVER (AP)—San Antonio Spurs guard Tony Parker is being held out of the team's game against the Denver Nuggets because of a strained left hip flexor. San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said Thursday that Parker was injured during the team's last game, a 101-89 loss to the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday. Parker, averaging 16.9 points in 43 games, was sidelined for three games earlier this month after spraining his left ankle Jan. 27 against Atlanta.

Larry Bird urges Pacers fans to remain patient

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Pacers president Larry Bird is urging fans to remain patient through the team's struggles.

Indiana enters the All-Star break with an 18-34 record, well out of the playoff race after missing the postseason for the past three seasons. Last month, some players were openly wondering if their "weak-minded" defense could be righted and attendance woes have been a problem now for years, along with assorted off-the-court issues.

Yet Bird says the rebuilding phase that began when the Pacers traded Ron Artest in 2006 is on target, and will move into high gear after next season when the team gets salary cap space.

"We knew that we had to clean it out and rebuild it, and we knew we were going to go through some tough times," Bird told The Associated Press this week. "Nobody likes to lose, and everybody wants to be a part of a winner. We think we're on the right track to get there."

Bird also took the pressure off coach Jim O'Brien, who is in his third year after back-to-back 36-46 seasons. O'Brien signed a one-year extension last September to coach through the end of next season, and Bird said he is in no danger of being replaced.

"The one thing Jimmy bought into when he came here was that we were going to rebuild, and we were going to struggle at times," Bird said. "I always say the losses are on me because I want him to work these guys hard, develop the young guys we have and keep moving forward with what we have."

The Pacers have suffered through a series of injuries. Top scorer Danny Granger missed a month with a heel injury, center Jeff Foster is out for the season with a back injury, guard/forward Mike Dunleavy missed several weeks while recovering from knee surgery and rookie forward Tyler Hansbrough has missed the past month with an inner ear infection.

Healthy or not, Bird expected rough times.

"Even if we were healthy all year, I thought we could win 36 to 41 games with this team," he said. "In a rebuilding phase, which I think we're on track with, we'll just have to go forward with it."

Bird, whose resume includes three NBA titles and three MVP awards with the Boston Celtics, said the Pacers still could play better.

"The one thing about this team is that we stand too much and we settle way too much for the outside shot," he said. "If we get to the hole and put the pressure on the defense, we're a lot better. When we stand and just take outside shots, we have a tendency to struggle."

Granger, an All Star last season, hasn't been quite as good this season. He's still averaging 22.4 points per game, but that's down more than three points from last season. He's also shooting four percent lower from the field.

Forward Troy Murphy has remained steady, despite trade rumors. He averages 14 points and 9.9 rebounds per game.

Part of the rebuilding process has led the Pacers to play younger players. O'Brien sat point guard T.J. Ford for 18 games while getting rookie A.J. Price some additional minutes.

"T.J. knows that I respect his game, and he knows how much I like him," Bird said. "It's unfortunate that they're in that situation, but at that time, we wanted to see if A.J. could play, and we know he can."

A bright spot has been second-year center Roy Hibbert. The 7-foot-2 Georgetown product has become a fan favorite with flashes of dominance. He's averaging 11.1 points and 5.9 rebounds per game, but that comes with 3.6 fouls every 24 minutes. He also sometimes struggles against quicker post players.

"With Roy, he's made great strides," Bird said. "He'll continue to get better because of his work ethic. He'll struggle at times, but I think in the long run, he'll be a very valuable player for us."

Second-year guard Brandon Rush has been inconsistent, but has shown potential. He's averaging 8.7 points and 4.1 rebounds. Hopes were high after he averaged 18.3 points and shot 55 percent from the field in the final 10 games last season.

Eventually, Bird said, the young core players will gain experience playing as a unit under O'Brien. Until then, he said, wins might not come as often as fans would like.

"Jimmy's done an excellent job of doing the things I want him to do," Bird said. "It won't show in wins and losses, but it will show in the long run."

Vonn tests shin on skis for 1st time since injury

WHISTLER, British Columbia (AP)—Each step was noted with enthusiasm, seen as a sign Thursday that, yes, Lindsey Vonn might very well compete in five Olympic races, might be able to think once again about medals, not medicine. Painkillers and a Novocaine-like numbing cream for the American's badly bruised right shin? They seemed to dull the aching.

Wearing ski boots, something painful and depressing every time she tried it last week? She yanked them on and did a course inspection.

Actually skiing down a hill for the first time since getting injured Feb. 2, albeit only in a free run and not on the official course? It hurt, sure, but was the most exciting step of all, one that convinced Vonn she was ready to take part in the opening women's Olympic downhill training session later Thursday.

Alas, that practice wound up being called off after only two racers because of thick fog and low visibility—yet even that development was deemed encouraging by the group known as the Vonntourage.

"I was happy to be back on snow today," said Vonn, who lives and trains in Vail, Colo. "My shin was still very painful, but I feel like the injury is finally progressing a bit. I am always disappointed when a training run is canceled, but in this situation I definitely welcome the extra day to heal."

Indeed, her husband, Thomas, called the cancellation "fantastic."

"It's not like all her competitors are getting multiple runs down the course. Nobody got to ski it, really, today," said Thomas Vonn, who serves as a coach and chief adviser to his wife. "So it's another day of healing, and hopefully tomorrow she feels even better."

AP

In this Jan. 22, 2010, file photo, Lindsey Vonn of the United States, takes a curve on her way to winining an Women's World Cup super-G ski race, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

He said she still aims to race in all five women's Alpine events, which certainly would be a relief to the U.S. Ski Team, U.S. Olympic Committee and her fans - to say nothing of NBC and her various sponsors.

"She's never taken any races off the table. It's going to be a day to day: If she can do it, she's going to do it," Thomas Vonn said. "But she's not pulling out of anything at this point, and it's looking better than it was yesterday."

U.S. Ski Team women's coach Jim Tracy was as optimistic as anyone.

He knows full well her history of brushing aside injuries and pain - whether it was making the quick transition from hospital bed to starting gate after a horrific crash in downhill training at the 2006 Turin Olympics, or managing not to miss a single race after badly bruising her arm in December.

Said Tracy of his team's most famous member: "We're hoping that she's going to go full-bore. ... We're not talking about skipping any events. We're on a normal program."

And the ultimate decisions about how much to train and compete will be made by Vonn, not the team.

"I'm not going to tell her she can't race. And I'm not going to tell her she has to race," Tracy said. "It's her health."

Before her injury became known Wednesday, Vonn was widely considered a contender for perhaps three or four medals—and an overwhelming favorite to win golds in the downhill and super-G—and become the breakout star of the Vancouver Games.

The first women's race of the Olympics, the super-combined, is scheduled for Sunday, and the outlook for Vonn evolved quite a bit in the 24 hours since the two-time World Cup overall champion raised the possibility of not being able to compete at all.

"She had a smile today," Thomas Vonn said. "It's very encouraging. Like, it seems like it's kind of turning a corner, based off today."

Lindsey Vonn has been trying all manner of measures to speed the healing process since she banged her boot against her right leg in a headfirst tumble earlier this month during pre-Olympic training in Austria. She tried things as basic as stretching. She tried laser therapy. She even tried wrapping her leg with an Austrian curd cheese to bring down the swelling.

On Thursday, she raised the bar, writing on her Twitter feed in the morning that she "took a bunch" of painkillers and "numbed my shin with some creams."

Later in the day, Vonn posted on Facebook: "The pain level has gone down from a sharp debilitating pain to something that I feel I may be able to grit my teeth through."

U.S. Ski Team doctor Bill Sterett's assessment?

"Everything," he said, "seems to be resolving."

Although a physical therapist recommended changing boots, possibly by cushioning where the top of the equipment meets the bruise, Thomas Vonn said they decided against that, lest it affect her performance.

The women's training was cut short after American Stacey Cook crashed landing a jump and was flown by helicopter to a medical facility. She was released hours later with nothing more than what USOC chief medical officer Jim Moeller called "some pain and stiffness." The men's downhillers managed to squeeze in a full training session, meaning there is a chance of racing as scheduled Saturday.

If there is more snow and fog, if there are more delays, no family will be happier than the Vonns.

"We've heard a lot about Whistler weather, and we welcome it at this point," Thomas Vonn said. "It's probably not popular, but we welcome it."

Dustin Johnson opens with 64 at Pebble

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP)—Dustin Johnson wanted to make sure he got off to a good start as the defending champion of the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. He succeeded Thursday because of a phenomenal finish.

Johnson overpowered the par 5s on a pristine day at Pebble Beach and closed with five consecutive birdies to tie the tournament record with a 30 on the back nine. He finished with an 8-under 64 and was atop the leaderboard.

Charley Hoffman had a 6-under 64 on the Shore Course at Monterey Peninsula, the newcomer to a three-course rotation that opened to rave reviews and scenery to match.

"One of my favorites now on tour," Phil Mickelson said after a 68 at Monterey Peninsula.

The best round might have belonged to David Duval, who played bogey-free until the final hole for a 5-under 67 at Spyglass Hill, traditionally the toughest course of the bunch. The average score at Spyglass was 71.52, compared with a 70.89 at Pebble Beach and a 69.97 at Monterey Peninsula.

So who's leading?

"No one," Duval said, laughing. "All the courses are so different. It's hard to tell until after the third day."

J.B. Holmes finished eagle-birdie at Pebble Beach for a 7-under 65, an unusual streak that began by holing out an 8-iron on the par-4 eighth hole over the edge of the Pacific Ocean. K.J. Choi also had a 65 at Pebble Beach.

The most famous of the three courses was the best place to be in such serene conditions. If wind and rain is in the forecast—anything is possible in these parts—it's best to get Pebble out of the way.

"It's one of the best places you want to be when it's good weather," Johnson said. "It's so pretty, too. It's a fun place to be."

It's always good to have length, and Johnson used that to his advantage.

He reached the front edge of the green on the 573-yard 14th hole, setting up a chip and a putt to start his birdie run. Johnson was worried momentarily when he pulled his 3-wood toward the out-of-bounds stake, safe by some 20 feet and leaving him a sand wedge that he hit inside 6 feet. Johnson finished with another big drive that left him only a 3-iron to the middle of the par-5 18th green.

But it was a 7-iron that left him the most pleased.

Johnson had 169 yards to the hole, typically an 8-iron. But with the pin to the back right, he tried to protect against too much spin down the slope. Instead, he hit what Johnson called a "chip 7-iron" that settled about 6 feet away.

"One of the better swings," he said.

Johnson missed a 30-inch par putt on the fifth hole, but that's not unusual at this tournament, with soft, damp greens that get plenty of footprints considering the 156 players each have an amateur partner.

Holmes also missed a par putt about that length on the par-3 seventh hole, but he bounced back better than he could have imagined. The 8-iron over a corner of the ocean to a tough green at No. 8 covered the flag and landed about 10 feet behind the cup before it spun back into the hole. He followed that with a 40-foot birdie putt on the ninth.

"That's one of those rare occasions when you make one and you actually hit it perfect," he said of his 8-iron from 175 yards.

Holmes has been working with Dave Stockton over the last month, and the first instruction was to ditch the belly putter. Stockton wanted Holmes to putt the way he did as a kid—similar to the advice Stockton gave Mickelson—and Holmes learned quickly that it was tough to make a forward press with the end of a putter jabbed into his gut.

"That was a pretty quick decision," Holmes said. "I had been wanting to go to the short putter, anyway."

The celebrities were at Monterey Peninsula, and the antics were at a minimum. Most of them—whether it's Bill Murray or George Lopez or Andy Garcia—pace themselves for the third round Saturday at Pebble Beach.

The best golf out of Mickelson's group belonged to Brian Gay, who shot a 68. Mickelson made the turn at 3 under, but he missed a short par putt on the 14th and played his final eight holes in 1 over.

One similarity to Pebble—along with the Pacific scenery—is that it's best to play Monterey Peninsula on a calm day. Half of the holes run along the coast, making them exposed to the wind.

"We caught it on a pretty calm day, and I thought that there were some low rounds to be had out there," Mickelson said. "But you've got to make some putts. That was the one area that I didn't quite do."

Hoffman's highlight was an eagle at the par-5 sixth with a hybrid that cleared the bunker and stayed on the top shelf, some 18 feet away. His green-and-black shoes were no match for the "Gumby & Smurf" pairing of 18-year-old Ryo Ishikawa, dressed all in green, and 21-year-old Rickie Fowler, dressed all in blue.

Fowler wound up with a 67, while the Japanese teen had a 72.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	32	18	.640	—
Toronto	29	23	.558	4
Philadelphia	20	32	.385	13
New York	19	32	.373	13 1/2
New Jersey	4	48	.077	29

Southeast Division

Orlando	36	18	.667	—
Atlanta	33	18	.647	1 1/2
Charlotte	26	25	.510	8 1/2
Miami	26	27	.491	9 1/2
Washington	17	33	.340	17

Central Division

Cleveland	43	11	.796	—
Chicago	25	26	.490	16 1/2
Milwaukee	24	27	.471	17 1/2
Detroit	18	33	.353	23 1/2
Indiana	18	34	.346	24

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	32	20	.615	—
San Antonio	30	21	.588	1 1/2
Houston	27	24	.529	4 1/2
New Orleans	28	25	.528	4 1/2
Memphis	26	25	.510	5 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	35	18	.660	—
Utah	32	19	.627	2
Oklahoma City	30	21	.588	4
Portland	31	24	.564	5
Minnesota	13	40	.245	22

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	41	13	.759	—
Phoenix	31	22	.585	9 1/2
L.A. Clippers	21	31	.404	19
Sacramento	18	34	.346	22
Golden State	14	37	.275	25 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Cleveland 115, Orlando 106
San Antonio 111, Denver 92

NBA LEADERS

SCORING

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
James, CLE	53	535	412	1580	29.8
Durant, OKC	51	500	442	1517	29.7
Anthony, DEN	39	392	327	1149	29.5
Bryant, LAL	51	527	302	1426	28.0
Wade, MIA	53	498	354	1404	26.5
Ellis, GOL	48	494	225	1259	26.2
Nowitzki, DAL	51	445	338	1257	24.6
Bosh, TOR	52	452	358	1268	24.4
Johnson, ATL	51	432	146	1100	21.6
Stoudemire, PHX	53	422	280	1124	21.2
Jackson, CHA	51	387	213	1066	20.9
Maggette, GOL	47	312	343	977	20.8
Randolph, MEM	51	421	197	1045	20.5
Evans, SAC	47	348	235	955	20.3
Kaman, LAC	46	380	159	919	20.0
Lee, NYK	51	428	162	1018	20.0
Gay, MEM	49	373	187	971	19.8
Rose, CHI	51	421	153	1000	19.6
Duncan, SAN	47	360	193	913	19.4
Boozer, UTA	48	371	188	930	19.4

FG PERCENTAGE

	FG	FGA	PCT
Perkins, BOS	221	360	.614
Howard, ORL	309	515	.600
Gasol, MEM	281	478	.588
Hilario, DEN	275	469	.586
Millsap, UTA	233	409	.570
Bynum, LAL	305	537	.568
Horford, ATL	283	503	.563
Haywood, WAS	188	335	.561
O'Neal, CLE	223	399	.559
Lee, NYK	428	768	.557

REBOUNDS

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Howard, ORL	53	190	519	709	13.4
Camby, LAC	51	166	450	616	12.1
Noah, CHI	46	176	376	552	12.0
Randolph, MEM	51	221	369	590	11.6
Bosh, TOR	52	158	437	595	11.4
Lee, NYK	51	130	453	583	11.4
Wallace, CHA	49	100	434	534	10.9
Boozer, UTA	48	96	423	519	10.8
Duncan, SAN	47	152	355	507	10.8
Haywood, WAS	49	200	307	507	10.3

ASSISTS

	G	AST	AVG
Paul, NOR	38	424	11.2
Nash, PHX	53	587	11.1
Williams, UTA	46	449	9.8
Rondo, BOS	49	475	9.7
Kidd, DAL	51	472	9.3
James, CLE	53	436	8.2
B. Davis, LAC	52	412	7.9
Westbrook, OKC	51	382	7.5
Wade, MIA	53	345	6.5
Duhon, NYK	51	320	6.3

AT&T PEBBLE BEACH NATIONAL PRO-AM SCORES

PEBBLE BEACH, California (AP)–Scores Thursday from the $6.2 million Pebble Beach National Pro-Am (played on three courses golfers listed in par order): p-Pebble Beach Golf Links, 6,816 yards, Par 72; m-Monterey Peninsula CC, 6,838 yards, Par 70; s-Spyglass Hill GC, 6,953 yards, Par 72.

FIRST ROUND

Dustin Johnson	34-30–64p
J.B. Holmes	33-32–65p
K.J. Choi	31-34–65p
Charley Hoffman	31-33–64m
Jeff Maggert	32-33–65m
Blake Adams	33-32–65m
David Duval	34-33–67s
Matt Jones	33-34–67s
Mike Weir	33-34–67p
Alex Cejka	31-34–65m
Vijay Singh	33-32–65m
Bryce Molder	33-34–67p
Kevin Streelman	32-33–65m
John Senden	34-33–67s
D.J. Trahan	33-34–67p
Bo Van Pelt	32-33–65m
Chris Couch	35-33–68p
Garrett Willis	35-33–68p
Brian Gay	30-36–66m
J.P. Hayes	34-34–68s
Jim Furyk	33-35–68p
Steve Elkington	34-34–68p
Charlie Wi	34-34–68p
Parker McLachlin	31-37–68s
Alex Prugh	33-35–68s
Lee Janzen	33-36–69p
Paul Goydos	34-33–67m
Matt Kuchar	33-36–69s
Cameron Percy	34-35–69s
Rickie Fowler	32-35–67m
Bob Estes	35-34–69p
Padraig Harrington	33-36–69s
Vaughn Taylor	34-35–69s
John Mallinger	32-35–67m
Webb Simpson	31-36–67m
Brett Quigley	35-34–69s
Tom Pernice, Jr.	33-34–67m
Nick O'Hern	35-34–69s
Michael Letzig	33-34–67m
Martin Flores	34-35–69p
Tom Gillis	34-35–69s
Chris Riley	35-35–70p
Kevin Sutherland	34-34–68m
Phil Mickelson	32-36–68m
Sean O'Hair	36-34–70s
Chris Baryla	33-35–68m
Vance Veazey	36-34–70p
Pat Perez	31-37–68m
Jay Williamson	35-35–70s
Marc Leishman	35-35–70s
Will MacKenzie	37-33–70p
Scott McCarron	36-34–70p
Steve Marino	31-37–68m
James Driscoll	34-36–70s
Retief Goosen	34-36–70s
Josh Teater	36-34–70p
Michael Connell	34-36–70p
Spencer Levin	34-34–68m
Kevin Johnson	33-37–70p
Garth Mulroy	34-36–70s
Luke Donald	34-36–70p
Ted Purdy	35-35–70p
Nicholas Thompson	33-35–68m
Sergio Garcia	33-35–68m
Daniel Chopra	35-33–68m
Jeff Quinney	34-36–70s
Ryuji Imada	37-33–70s
Tim Clark	37-33–70s
Troy Merritt	31-37–68m
Jerod Turner	32-36–68m
Martin Laird	36-35–71s
Brad Faxon	35-36–71s
Jason Gore	33-36–69m
Chris DiMarco	34-35–69m
Brian Davis	35-36–71p
Jason Day	37-34–71p
Brent Delahoussaye	34-35–69m
Greg Owen	35-36–71s
Notah Begay III	32-39–71p
Jerry Pate	36-35–71s
Rocco Mediate	34-35–69m
Jeff Gove	35-36–71p
Mark Wilson	36-35–71p
Rod Pampling	34-35–69m
Davis Love III	35-34–69m
Kevin Na	36-35–71p
Nick Watney	36-35–71p
John Daly	32-37–69m
Kyle Stanley	37-34–71p
Cameron Tringale	37-34–71p
Derek Lamely	35-34–69m
Rich Beem	38-34–72p
Robert Garrigus	35-37–72s
Aaron Baddeley	36-36–72p
Omar Uresti	35-37–72p
David Lutterus	36-36–72p
Rory Sabbatini	33-37–70m
Greg Kraft	32-38–70m
Jonathan Byrd	34-36–70m
Brandt Snedeker	35-37–72s
Justin Bolli	33-37–70m
Fran Quinn	34-38–72p
Brian Stuard	35-37–72s
Chris Wilson	36-36–72s
J.J. Henry	34-38–72s
Ricky Barnes	35-37–72s
Brenden Pappas	33-39–72p
Hunter Mahan	35-35–70m
Kris Blanks	38-34–72s
Sam Saunders	36-36–72s
Scott Piercy	37-36–73s
Joe Ogilvie	37-36–73s
Harrison Frazar	36-37–73s
Mathias Gronberg	37-36–73p
Bill Lunde	36-37–73p
Craig Bowden	36-37–73p
Roger Tambellini	35-38–73s
Ryan Palmer	36-35–71m
Steve Lowery	37-36–73p
Matt Every	35-38–73p
Heath Slocum	35-36–71m
John Huston	36-37–73s
Adam Scott	36-37–73s
Henrik Bjornstad	35-36–71m
Tim Petrovic	36-36–72m
Stuart Appleby	36-36–72m
Steve Wheatcroft	36-38–74s
Ryo Ishikawa	34-38–72m
Mathew Goggin	37-37–74s
Jimmy Walker	35-39–74p
Woody Austin	38-36–74s
Jason Bohn	36-36–72m
Matt Bettencourt	35-39–74s
Rich Barcelo	35-37–72m
Brendon de Jonge	38-36–74s
Chez Reavie	36-39–75p
Roland Thatcher	40-35–75p
Corey Pavin	34-39–73m
Tim Herron	35-38–73m
Brad Adamonis	40-35–75s
Mitch Lowe	34-39–73m
Billy Horschel	35-40–75s
Jeff Overton	34-41–75p
Johnson Wagner	34-41–75p
Mark Brooks	36-39–75p
Chris Stroud	37-36–73m
Graham DeLaet	37-38–75p
Jamie Lovemark	37-38–75s
Marc Turnesa	38-38–76p
Greg Chalmers	38-38–76s
Andrew McLardy	38-37–75m
Todd Hamilton	39-36–75m
Mark O'Meara	39-38–77s
Kevin Chappell	39-38–77s
Jeff Klauk	39-39–78s
Sandy Lyle	38-40–78p

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HANMI donates $2,000 to Saipan Marathon

In a bid to draw more international attention and attract more visitors to the Northern Mariana Islands, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands is lending its full support to next month's Saipan Marathon, with a substantial prize donation.

HANMI has sweetened the pot for competitors in the March 6, 2010, event by donating a $1,000 prize each to the top male and top female winner of the full-marathon category. In addition, member hotels will be assisting with the race orientation on March 5 and manning aid stations along the route.

"Sports tourism is a realistic development for the Northern Marianas, and we hope to entice both off-island competitors and our local athletes to the Saipan Marathon with this prize offering," said HANMI chairman Nick Nishikawa. "We would love to see the Saipan Marathon become one of largest regional marathons. With the support of the local government and community, that is an achievable goal."

Nishikawa added that the Saipan Marathon is on its way to becoming one of the Top 3 overseas marathons for Japanese runners. The Honolulu Marathon ranks first.

Over 1,000 participants are expected for the event, one of several signature events of the Marianas Visitors Authority aimed at attracting visitors and international media to the islands. The event will also include a half-marathon and 10K categories. The deadline to register with the MVA is Feb. 25, 2010.

HANMI was established in 1985 as a professional forum for the hospitality industry of the CNMI. ***(PR)***

SWEET

From Page 28

the 12th IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Berlin, Germany and to the 2009 Micronesian Athletics Championships/Oceania Regional Championships in Australia.

Second time is special

Bennett won the 2008 award after becoming Micronesia's fastest woman and setting CNMI national marks in 100m (12.99 seconds), 200m (26.65), and 400m (1:01.83).

She admitted achieving these feats without giving all her focus on training. However, the following year, she worked harder and overcame obstacles, making her prouder for winning the same award for the second straight time.

"This award is different from the first one because I worked hard to improve my performance. I did not expect to win this award again," Bennett said.

Bennett was not looking to receive the coveted award, as she had his share of ups and downs in 2009.

During the World Championships, she failed to join the qualifying race due to sickness. In the MAC in Australia, she competed in three events in one day and almost gave up due to fatigue.

"It was one of the most challenging times for me. I wasn't feeling well and I had tightened up my hamstrings but I was able to pull myself together and finish all of my races. The last race I ran that day got me the gold medal for the 400m," Bennett said.

Passionate, committed

Yvonne started getting involved in athletics in 2005 through the encouragement of her twin sister, Yvette. Yvonne then joined the All Schools Meet in 2005 and won in the 100m race and 4x100m relay.

"It was quite a challenge because I competed without any training, believe it or not," added Bennett, who then put more time in training starting in 2006 and from just a student-athlete, she went to represent the CNMI to various regional and international tournaments.

"As years go by, I see how much athletics has affected my life. I'm always proud to represent the CNMI. This is the sport that I have learned to love and I plan on sticking with it in the future," said Bennett, who is hoping to earn a spot on the track team of Boise State University in Idaho.

When she leaves for the Mainland and aim for a higher goal, Bennett hopes the sports community will remember her positive influence to fellow athletes.

"I would like the CNMI sports community to remember me as a passionate and committed athlete and an advocate and role model to aspiring athletes and to the community," she said.

Bennett also has a message to aspiring athletes, especially, the female ones: Stay in the sport you are committed to, train hard, take it seriously, but make sure you still have fun doing it. Once your mind is set on something, nothing and no one can stop you from reaching your goals," she said.

NMA

From Page 28

2009 World Youth Championships in Bressanone, Italy, racing in the 200m run and finishing seventh in his heat.

Kenty was the CNMI's bet to the 12th IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Berlin, Germany, and tied his personal best time in the 100m race, clocking in at 12.99 seconds. Clayton also joined the CNMI Team in Australia, winning a silver in the 400m hurdles and bronze in the 4x100m relay.

In the open division, the awardees were sprinter Yvonne Bennett and Tyrone Omar. Omar claimed two gold medals in the MAC, ruling the 100m run and 200m races. Bennett notched a gold in the 400m race and a silver in the 100m run. She also represented the CNMI in the 100m run in the 12th IAAF World Championships in Athletics.

Other awardees in various age groups were Julia Ishikawa and Anthony Deleon Guerrero, in the 8-and-under division, Lucy Park and Juan Quitugua in the 10-and-under, Gabrille Race, Joanne Reyes, and Angelo Jones in the 12-and-under, and Brandon Philip and Rachel Abrams in the 14-and-under.

These athletes won several events in the All Schools Meet and Cross Country Championships.

In the Road Runner category, there were repeat winners in perennial long distance races champion Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel and Mamiko Oshima-Berger.

The two long distance runners won various events NMA organized last year. Kabiriel also represented the CNMI in the half marathon event in Australia and in the MAC, winning in the 10,000m run and 400m hurdles.

Before recognizing the top performers of 2009, NMA had a slideshow, highlighting the association's various tournaments and athletes achievements.

After the awards ceremony for athletes, NMA also awarded plaques of appreciation to outgoing president Kurt Barnes and vice president Lou Wabol for their contributions to the sport.

3 TEAMS

From Page 28

The three winning squads, SaiPal, Island Rebels, and Man Amigos, scored more than 15 runs en route to separate victories.

Among the three, SaiPal tallied the most runs, drilling a 34-11 win over team Familia.

Pitcher Leo Bobai went 4-for-4 at bat and nailed four RBIs, while his five teammates added three RBIs each.

Jason Hayes, Lefty Shiro, and Hector Efraim homered at the bottom of the first inning where SaiPal logged 21 runs. Team Familia did not score in the first inning and absorbed its seventh loss in eight games after only three and a half innings.

The victory was SaiPal's eighth in 10 games.

Island Rebels 28, Berdax 22

Island Rebels posted their closest win so far, escaping past Berdax in a high-scoring match, 28-22.

Pitcher Craig Sanchez was 4-for-4 at and made five RBIs to keep Island Rebels perfect record in eight games for a share of the lead with Natibu. Center fielder Roy Celis went 5-for-5 at the plate and added four RBIs.

Berdax threatened to hand Island Rebels their first loss when the former led, 15-12, after four complete innings. However, Island Rebels recovered with a 12-run top of the fifth, built on Byron Kaipat's three-run homer and Roy Celis and Sanchez's two-run double apiece. Island Rebels never looked back to maintain their clean slate.

Man Amigos 19, G-Ballers 2

Man Amigos did not reach the 20-run mark, but still walked away with an easy 19-2 triumph over the G-Ballers.

Man Amigos shut out G-Ballers in the first four innings to improve to a 10-1 record. The G-Ballers dropped to a 2-8 mark.

Outfielder John Terlaje connected on a grand slam at the bottom of the second inning, turning a 3-0 lead to a 12-0 advantage. He went only 2-for-4 at bat, but finished with five RBIs.

G-Ballers scored their two runs at the bottom of the fifth inning on solo homers from Ray Terlaje and Jude Dickinson.

BANMI

From Page 28

program.

He had visited schools in the past days and also watched games in the MISO high school and junior high school caging. Burns also met with players trying out for the CNMI Men's and Women's National Teams and is set to visit Tinian next week.

Burns is a Level 2 accredited basketball coach and Level 1A referee and was named FIBA Oceania zone development officer only last year. He is a graduate of Bachelor of Applied Science (sports coaching and administration) from Dreakin University and Melbourne and had assisted basketball teams in Australia in various capacities. He was the team manager and try-out coordinator for the U16 Victoria Metro squad that placed first in the National Championship and assisted the Australian National U/22 Men's Basketball Team with video analysis in preparation for the series against New Zealand and the Junior World Championships in 2001.

For more information about the forum, contact, Rangamar at 664-2502 or at eli_rang@yahoo.com. ***(PR)***

Vonn tests shin on skis for 1st time since injury

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Cavs beat Magic for 13th straight victory

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Sweeter the second time around

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Third of a five-part series

(Editor's Note: On Tuesday, Feb. 16, NMASA will be holdings its 2009 Sports Banquet. To mark the occasion, Saipan Tribune *will be publishing a series of articles that will pay tribute to the winners of the annual awards night.)*

Tuesday's 2009 NMASA Sports Banquet will be *déjà vu* for Yvonne Bennett, as the sprinter will go up on the stage of the Seaside Hall of Saipan Grand Hotel, anew to receive the Female Athlete of the Year Award, which she also won in 2008.

ATHLETES of the YEAR

Bennett earned back-to-back NMASA Female Athlete of the Year plums, following her domination in local sprint races and her exploits in off-island events.

The Kagman High School graduate swept the sprint race in the All Schools Meet and represented the CNMI in

See SWEET on Page 27

Yvonne Bennett is seen here training for an off-island tournament last year.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The top athletes of 2009 pose for a group photo during the NMA Annual Awards Banquet at the Napu Room of the Pacific Islands Club on Thursday night.

NMA fetes top athletes

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas Athletics recognized CNMI athletes who excelled in on- and off-island tournaments last year in an awards banquet held Thursday at the Napu Room of the Pacific Island Club.

Fourteen athletes received awards at the banquet that also served as a trip down memory lane as NMA paid tribute to the two pillars of Commonwealth athletics.

Leading the awardees were athletes who represented the CNMI to the prestigious 2009 Micronesian Athletics Championships/Oceania Regional Championships in Australia and helped the Commonwealth grabbed the MAC title from perennial champion Guam.

Northern Marianas Athletics

One of them was Jacque Wonenberg, who was unanimously voted NMA Athlete of the Year in the 18-and-under age group.

The Marianas High School graduate collected six gold medals in the Land Down Under, prevailing in the women's long jump, 100m hurdles, women's triple jump, 400m hurdles, and the 4x400m and 4x100m relay runs.

In the boys' 18-and-under division, D.J. Ngirongor and Clayton Kenty shared the top award after also representing the CNMI to off-island tournaments.

Ngirongor competed in Sudtirol

See NMA on Page 27

BANMI, FIBA Oceania official to hold forum

Basketball Association of Northern Marianas Islands is inviting all basketball league organizers, team managers, and coaches to participate in a group forum and discussion with FIBA Oceania zone development officer Ryan Burns and BANMI president Elias Rangamar on Monday at 6:30pm at the conference room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

"With the enduring evolution of modern basketball and as the governing body of basketball in the CNMI, we have an obligation to provide a unified and comprehensive structure for all of the basketball stakeholders in the CNMI. To accomplish this, we need the feedback of all basketball league organizers. We need to share ideas and build partnership to have credibility, consistency, and order to our basketball environment," BANMI said in a statement.

Burns arrived on Saipan last Saturday and will be staying on island for two weeks to find ways to help in Commonwealth's basketball development

See BANMI on Page 27

Saipan Southern High School and Kagman High School players in action during the MISO caging, whose organizer and coaches are invited to a BANMI-led forum on Monday.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

3 teams on target in Chamolinian league

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Three teams had their bats do the talking in Wednesday night's action in Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slow-pitch Softball League as they scored one run after another at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

See 3 TEAMS on Page 27

John Terlaje, seen here pitching in a local tournament, hit a grand slam in Man Amigos 19-2 rout of G-Ballers during their game in the Chamolinian softball league at the Capital Hill Ballfield on Wednesday.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO